

Gerstein Crisis Centre

Annual Report 2020-2021



H2H Crisis Workers, Summer 2021

Letter From Our Leadership

Dear Friends,

We wish we could say that 2021 was a very different year than 2020 but given how much of our attention has been placed on continuing to stay ahead of the pandemic and keep people safe and supported, it can be hard to discern one day from the next let alone the last 18 months. In 2021, our crisis workers have continued to be there for individuals in crisis, handling 42,000 crisis calls, responding to over 1450 of people through our mobile team, and providing follow-up and crisis stays to hundreds more.

For more than 30 years, Gerstein has been providing Toronto communities with safe, humane, equity-based crisis services to individuals where and when they need it, from our 24/7 telephone line to an in-person mobile team and short-term crisis beds. We understand that a non coercive approach that works to support the autonomy of the individual in crisis can often be better achieved on a team that is not coming in with the baggage of law enforcement or a psychiatric hospital. A community-based team can hold greater trust and less fear for the individual in crisis and provide a respectful response understanding the individual beyond a diagnosis and as a whole person with many stressors, needs, strengths and resources.

This year, the mental health community in Toronto has been active and vocal, highlighting the need for diverse, non-police responses to those experiencing a mental health crisis. We have joined them in their advocacy for low barrier, community-based responses to mental health crisis that connect people to needed services. Through funding from the City of Toronto and in partnership with other services, we have strengthened our capacity to respond to individuals in crisis at the neighbourhood level through our collaborative Here to Help (H2H) Team in Moss Park and Church Wellesley and we have had impact at a system level by co locating a Crisis Worker at 911 where Gerstein works collaboratively, but distinctly from, Toronto Police Services to assist in the diversion of non-emergent mental health related calls away from a police response.

Gerstein Crisis Centre continues to be committed to being an accessible source of support and recovery for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, working collaboratively to improve timely and equitable access to services that are guided by the voices of those with lived experience, to promote wellness, recovery, and strong consumer survivor networks. We all need healthy, thriving communities that include everyone. Thank you to the incredible staff and to our many committed Board members for the great work you have all done this year.

With thanks,
Susan and Lisa



Here to Help (H2H)



Interview with H2H Program Coordinator Sim Shukla and Crisis Intervention Workers Abhi Nair and Matt Bell.

How did H2H come about?

The City of Toronto has funded Inner-City Family Health Team and Gerstein Crisis Centre along with The Neighbourhood Group, Dixon Hall, Homes First and Seeds of Hope to launch a project in two neighbourhoods in the mid east (the Church Street Corridor and Moss Park) to provide a community-based response to conflict and crisis in those areas. This collaboration aims to Respond, Respect, and Listen and will use an approach that includes non-coercive engagement and outreach. Here to Help (H2H) was launched in June 2021 in the Church and Wellesley corridor, and September 2021 in the Moss Park neighbourhood.

What is involved in the work H2H does?

H2H is one response in the Downtown Toronto East (DTE) Action Plan that contributes to making the DTE a livable, healthy and prosperous community. H2H responds to calls in the community from concerned citizens or businesses where someone is concerned about a community member or where there may be a conflict. The intention is to support all community members who live and work in the Church and Wellesley and Moss Park neighbourhoods.

Who are the responders?

We have a range of expertise to help de-escalate and address crisis situations in the community, taking a non-coercive, equity-based, trauma-informed approach. The H2H team includes Harm Reduction Workers, Crisis Intervention Workers, Nurses, a Community Support Worker, a Transitional Case Manager and Community Peer Workers. Two to three workers respond to calls. Our Harm Reduction worker carries harm reduction supplies and Narcan. H2H also offers on-site nursing care for non-emergency situations, short-term transitional case management, and works to connect those in the community to a range of services including primary care, mental health and addictions services, harm reduction and withdrawal management services, emergency shelters, meals, drop-ins, cooling/warming centres, clothing, and wellness/support groups. H2H quickly responds in person to crises and conflicts identified by community stakeholders and provides wellness checks, crisis counselling, at-risk to self or other assessments, non-violent conflict resolution, and other client focused follow-up services.



"The H2H team offers a low-barrier service and meets individuals where they are."

Sim Shukla
Program Coordinator, H2H



9-1-1 Co-Location Project



Beginning in early October, Gerstein Crisis Centre and the Toronto Police Service (TPS) launched a Pilot Project that co locates a Crisis Worker in TPS 911 Communications for 20-hours a day, seven days a week. 9-1-1 responders screen mental health crisis calls within 51, 52 and 14 Division and with their consent, divert relevant calls to the Crisis Worker.

Crisis workers provide immediate intervention over the phone and will work with the caller to understand their situation, provide timely support and based on the needs of the caller will work to connect them to mental health services, primary care, income support, shelter, harm reduction services, counselling and treatment in the community,

The Project has already resulted in the diversion of callers away from a police response. Many people call 9-1-1 because they do not know who else to call as a last resort. The mental health community in Toronto has highlighted the need for greater access to mental health services and non-police crisis responses to those experiencing a mental health crisis. Gerstein Crisis Centre agrees, and this collaboration is a one step in that direction.

"This is a collaboration that promotes direct access to mental health supports and away from a police response."

Susan Davis
Gerstein Crisis Centre, Executive Director

"We give individuals a choice and a voice in helping navigate supports they believe are relevant."

Carla Pearson
Co-ordinator, 9-1-1 Diversion Program

Gerstein by the Numbers



49,559
Crisis Calls



675
Crisis Visits*



217
House Stays*



70
**Wellness &
Recovery Group
Sessions**

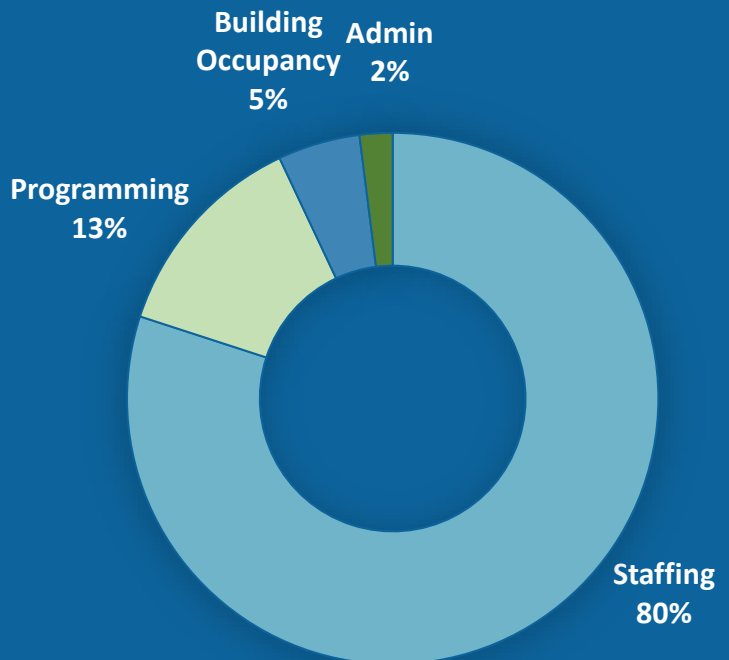


505
**Trained in Crisis
& Suicide
Intervention**

Revenue

Toronto Central LHIN **95%**
Foundation grants, donations, training
revenue, City of Toronto, and other
income **5%**

Expenses



*In person crisis visits and house stays were fewer this year due to the Pandemic

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

JM Foundation

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...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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