

2023



ANNUAL REPORT

Gerstein Crisis Centre



Letter From Our Leadership

Dear Friends,

The last year has been one of considerable growth at Gerstein Crisis Centre, as we have expanded our services in new and innovative ways. Our work has included the addition of the Toronto Community Crisis Service, the continuation of our Here 2 Help program, the 911 Co Location Project, and most recently our pilot program placing Crisis Workers in libraries to reach people who use the libraries that could benefit from our support.

We have added 35 Crisis Workers to our team, provided an additional 7,000 mobile team visits in the community, diverted thousands of callers away from a police crisis response to a community health response, and supported over 400 library patrons just since the start of the TPL Project in July 2023.

Gerstein Crisis Centre was recently recognized by Human Rights Watch for the work we do and working together, we have developed a useable and replicable framework– entitled - Mental Health Crisis Support Rooted in Community and Human Rights – that is based on the best practices we have developed over our many years of service. We are hoping to help improve the experience and health outcomes of Canadians living with mental health concerns by providing a framework for a holistic approach to mental health crisis response that supports the autonomy, dignity, experience, and expertise of individuals in crisis.

Over the past year we also prioritized work to reimagine our approach to serving community, and to supporting staff, from an anti-oppression and anti-racism lens. Our Anti Racism Steering Committee has engaged all levels of the organization to reflect together on how we centre the voices of people with lived experience and Black, Indigenous, and Racialized people throughout the organization. This work is a shared responsibility for all of us across the organization, and we look forward to continuing to learn and unlearn together.

Our values are at the heart of our work and partnerships, but we still have much work to do to address the stressors our community is facing. Our communities are experiencing higher rates of more serious mental health concerns, extremely inadequate housing and income supports to address their basic needs, and an overdose crisis that continues to devastate our friends, families, and loved ones.

Gerstein Centre works collaboratively with a network of partners to help create wholistic, streamlined pathways for people to access needed health and social services. Despite these collaborative efforts, we continue to face barriers connecting people to the supports they need. More investment in mental health, substance use supports, income assistance, and housing is needed to address the gaps that leave our communities without the foundation they need to be well.

Finally, we would not be able to do with this work at Gerstein Crisis Centre without the support of so many incredible, staff, volunteers, and community partners. Our incredible staff bring knowledge, creativity, flexibility, and the commitment to honouring the humanity of everyone they meet. We would also like to thank our Board of Directors for the dedication and expertise they bring to supporting the Gerstein Crisis Centre's mission, vision, and values. A huge thank you to our community and our community partners for your support and for your trust in us as we continue to deliver on our commitment to community crisis support.

Susan Davis & Adam Wheeler



Gerstein Crisis Centre:

Mental Health Crisis Support Rooted in Community and Human Rights



In 2021, Human Rights Watch, an internationally respected organization of investigation, action, and advocacy, released a web feature and video highlighting the work and approaches of Gerstein Crisis Centre.

Since that time, HRW and GCC have worked together to develop a case study entitled **Mental Health Crisis Support Rooted in Community and Human Rights**.

A launch event for this document was held at Gerstein on November 15, 2023. This was moderated by Susan Davis, Executive Director of Gerstein and featured an exceptional panel of speakers who offered a broad range of perspectives: Carlos Rios-Espanosa, Associate Director at the Disability Rights Division, Human Rights Watch, Kaola Baird, who has received support from GCC, worked for FRESH and continues to work as peer in the community, Darna Savariau-Daley, a highly skilled Gerstein crisis worker and mentor, Jennifer Chambers, Executive Director of the Empowerment Council and Olivia Chow, Mayor of the City of Toronto.

This case study, based on work being done at Gerstein Crisis Centre is intended to provide a viable and replicable framework for a holistic approach to mental health crisis response that works to support the autonomy, dignity, experience, and expertise of the individual in crisis. This case study highlights the work of our crisis teams and the voices of our community members. It outlines a rights-respecting alternative to over-medicalization and police-led interventions. It provides a detailed description of the Centre's approaches to crisis response that are trauma-informed, non-medical and focused on harm reduction, information, empowerment, and consent, describing lessons learned and good practices emerging from decades of mental health support.

This case study is a collaboration between Human Rights Watch and Gerstein Crisis Centre with a goal to help promote principles and practices that encourage governments and community-based organizations to make fundamental changes to mental health care that are human rights respecting, based on the lived and living experience of those with mental health and substance use crises. Services are encouraged to be rooted in and reflect the communities in which they serve, in compliance with the principles in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Strengthening our Approach to Anti-Racism



Since its inception, Gerstein Crisis Centre has worked toward achieving a welcoming and safer space for our community and continues to be guided by the voices, experiences, and expertise of those with lived experiences. There is still much work to be done.

We recognize that intersectional identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and language impact the way in which Indigenous, Black, racialized people and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals access mental health and crisis services.

We are committed to critical analysis of our own role in upholding systemic injustices both as a service provider and in wider system planning.

We are also committed to using our voice to improve equitable access to services, develop inclusive service practices and to speak out and actively challenge racism and discrimination.

This year at Gerstein Crisis Centre we have taken on collective work as an organization to deepen our commitments to anti racism through a newly established Anti Racism Steering Committee inclusive of all levels of the organization to help guide the work and keep us accountable to our commitments.

[Please follow this link to view our Anti Racism statement.](https://gersteincentre.org)





Staff Attending a Downtown Toronto
Demonstration Supporting Gender &
Sexual Education in Schools
Sept 20th 2023

In Our Community



Attending the Sunrise Ceremony at
the Indigenous Legacy Gathering
Sept 29th 2023 - Nathan Phillips Square

<https://gersteincentre.org>



Mobile Team Paying a Visit
to an Encampment in
Downtown Toronto (2023)

F.R.E.S.H

(Finding Recovery through Exercise, Skill & Hope)

F.R.E.S.H (Finding Recovery through Exercise, Skill and Hope) is a Gerstein built initiative that uses a peer- based approach to support individuals dealing with mental health and/or substance use issues by focusing on recovery through physical activity, social engagement, and community building.

FRESH offers 40 plus activities per week and employs 15 part-time peers, many of which were previous Gerstein clients and or FRESH participants.

This past year, the program offered trips to Guildwood Park, Elora and Niagara Falls, along with 2 urban canoe trips and invited participants to bi- weekly trips to The Rouge Valley

FRESH recently partnered with The Toronto Public Library Services and offers activities at 4 down-town libraries.



New Collaboration with Toronto Public Library(TPL)

Gerstein Crisis Centre and TCCS are providing crisis supports to TPL's customers that are experiencing the often-intersecting vulnerabilities of mental health needs, substance use, low income, and homelessness or precarious housing. This pilot is located at four Toronto Public Library branches, primarily at Toronto Reference Library and Lillian H. Smith, with additional resources and programming available at Sanderson and Fort York.

This innovative pilot uses a multifaceted approach to service delivery, including on-site crisis support, referrals and connection to other needed supports and services, and on-site wellness and recovery groups, including F.R.E.S.H. and W.R.A.P. A client-facing hub will be located within each of the pilot library spaces to meet with library users and deliver recovery focused programming.

Community crisis workers and library staff collaborate to develop meaningful relationships and connections with regular library users, utilizing an integrated, client-informed approach which focuses on meeting the library user where they are at and providing supports people want and need in a low-barrier, accessible way. The goal of this pilot is both to provide on-site crisis de-escalation and crisis support, and to create an access point for library users to connect with resources outside of the library setting, including mental health, primary care, housing, and recovery supports.





Here 2 Help



It's official; Here to Help (H2H) has completed year 3 and has been extended for another year! What an exciting year it's been, from collaborating with other Downtown East organizations to attending PRIDE, healing and drumming circles in Barbara Hall Park, Overdose Prevention Day, and community safety bi-annual meetings, amongst many other local community engagements.

The H2H team is honoured to be nominated for the Inspire Awards for "Inspiring Community Organization of the Year". Inspire Awards honors the most inspiring people, youth, businesses and organizations in the LGBTQ2S+ Communities in Toronto and across Canada.

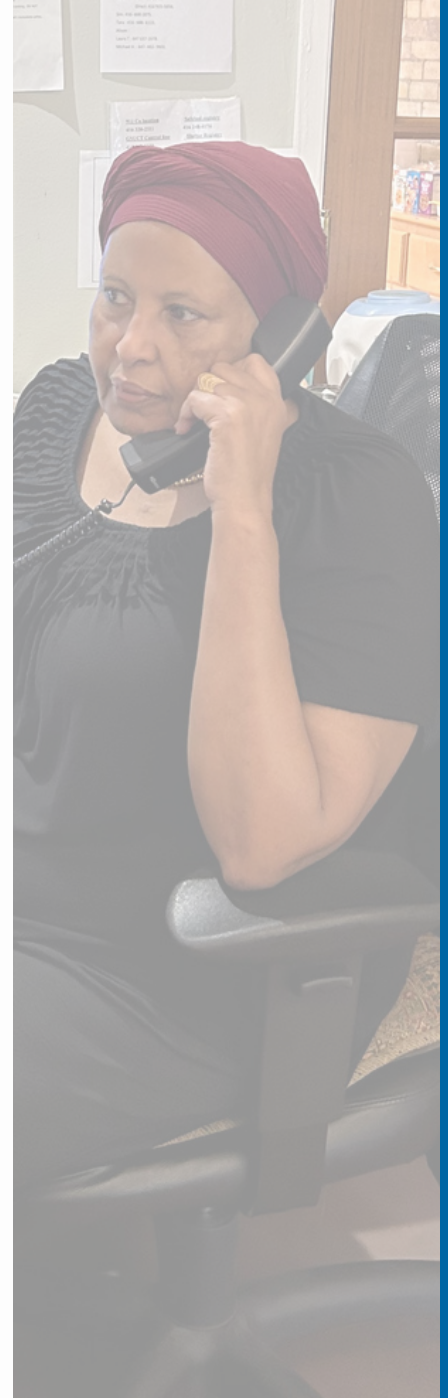
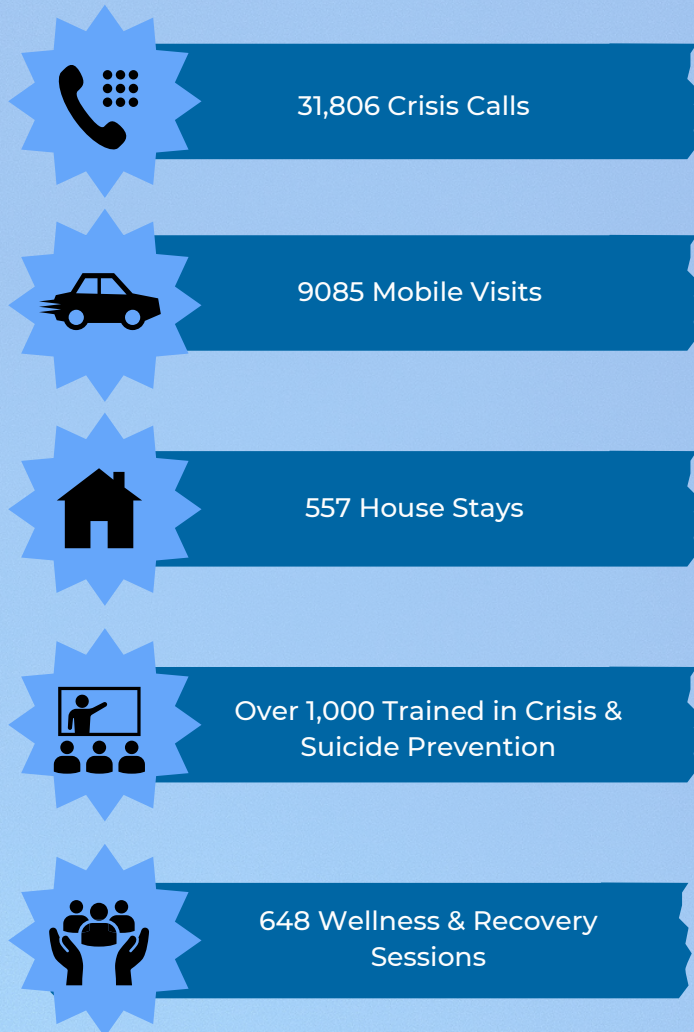
H2H established a presence in both Church and Wellesley and Moss Park, and has been able to get to know many retailers, residents and other community stakeholders by first names and offer support and be of assistance when situations arise. These strong community relationships have allowed H2H to offer a personal touch to difficult situations and help mitigate many negative impacts for all stakeholders. Relationships lead to improvement in communication and promote trust and collaboration.

The team continues to work from a trauma-informed, anti-colonial, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism lens to help navigate situations without involving a police response. Diverting from unneeded police interactions is engrained in our practice.

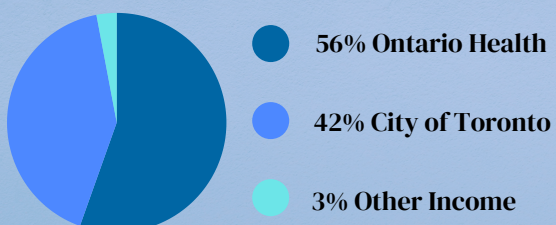
We would like to thank the local ice cream shop Creamery X for dedicating a flavour of the month to H2H and donating all proceeds from the sales to H2H.



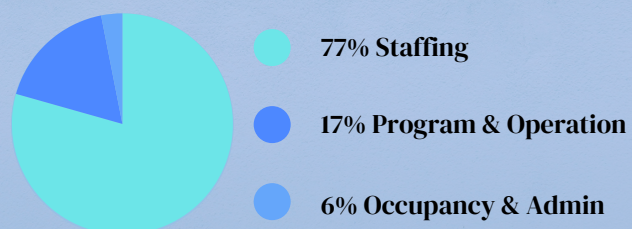
Gerstein By Numbers



Revenue



Expenses



Board of Directors

Adam Wheeler (Chair)

Angela Nyamweya

Desmond Rowley

Frank Gerstein

Indira Stewart

Kathryn Mettler

Lubna Khalid

Lucia Costa

Madeline Timlin

Marina Morrow

Stephanie Gloyn

Sonali Sagare



Thank You



Bertrand Gerstein Family Foundation
Jackman Foundation
JG Foundation at Toronto Foundation
ECHO Foundation
PayPal Giving Fund
Philip Smith Foundation

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*...and to the hundreds of supporters in our
community.*

*We appreciate your support and words of
encouragement!*

We gratefully
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thanks the
foundations and
key donors
supporting our
work

