

2021-2022



GERSTEIN CRISIS CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT

*DIGNITY. EMPATHY.
STRENGTH-BASED.
HARM REDUCTION.
TRAUMA INFORMED.
COORDINATION.
COLLABORATIVE
PROBLEM SOLVING.
DIGNITY. EMPATHY.
STRENGTH-BASED.
HARM REDUCTION.
TRAUMA INFORMED.
COORDINATION.
COLLABORATIVE*

An illustration of a two-story white house with a dark roof and a large, leafy green tree in the foreground. The house has several windows and a small porch. The tree is positioned to the right of the house, partially obscuring it.

Dear Friends,

2022 has been an exceptionally busy year as we have continued to strengthen our crisis responses to include multiple access points to crisis supports. We have worked to create low barrier, community-based responses to mental health crisis that provide safe, humane, equity-based crisis services to individuals where and when they need it by providing immediate crisis response and connecting people to the health and support services they need.

Along with Gerstein Crisis Services' existing 24-hour telephone crisis line and core crisis services that serve the whole City (we answered over 40,000 calls last year), we have connected crisis services to municipal services at 211 and 911 to increase the opportunity for individuals in crisis to get a crisis response that provides a community based, trauma informed, harm reduction approach using the skills and experience of trained crisis workers instead of police as responders. As an anchor partner with the City for the Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS) in the Downtown East, we have been providing in person crisis support and follow-up to people reaching out in an emergency. This program started in March with a focus on Toronto Police Service's 51 Division area and is expanding to support 52 Division in November 2022. We are excited to work with all the partners involved in this project, leveraging our existing services and those of our partners to better serve the community.

In October 2021, we began a partnership with Toronto Police Services to co-locate a Crisis Worker at 911 to provide an alternative to a police response for individuals calling 911 with a mental health concern or crisis. We are pleased to see that TPS will be extending this Pilot over the next year to cover all Divisions across the City and bring operations to 24 hours a day.

We are excited to see investments being made in creating a community based, crisis response infrastructure that allows a reliable alternative to police responses when people are experiencing a mental health crisis. Gerstein Crisis Centre believes strongly that a model in which the earliest intervention for mental health needs is provided by a mental health worker, rather than the police service, can provide opportunities to access the services people want and need to leverage help sooner, while reducing stigma and unnecessary police involvement.

The last three years have been difficult on our communities. Mental health concerns and inequitable access to services have been highlighted throughout the pandemic. Wait lists for mental health services and housing continue to be the norm. Gerstein Crisis Centre remains committed to strengthening collaboration, increasing partnerships and improving access so that service pathways are accessible and lead to the supports and services people need. We have many new team members to welcome this year and we could not be more impressed by the skill and commitment they bring to the work. Our staff team is exceptional and so many of our long serving staff have contributed to making sure the new services are upholding GCC's approach, mission and values. The Board of Directors continues to provide strong guidance and oversight

A huge thank you to everyone,

Susan and Lisa

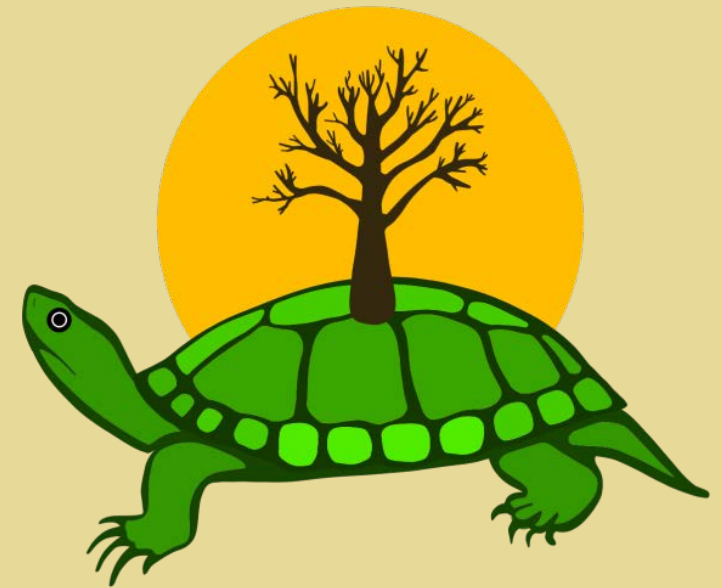


Land Acknowledgement

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. For that to happen, there must be an awareness of the past. All of us must listen, self reflect on how we are situated in that history and work to understand and acknowledge the history from Indigenous perspectives.

Gerstein Crisis Centre acknowledges the land we serve on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We respect and acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Toronto is in the territory subject to the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region. Indigenous Nations and Peoples, Europeans and all newcomers are invited to join in this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect.



Turtle Island Emoji by Chief Lady Bird

A Community-Based Response to Mental Health Crisis

As one of four Anchor Partners for the City of Toronto led Pilot, Gerstein Crisis Centre launched our Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS) Team in the Downtown East on March 31, 2022. The TCCS pilot was developed after extensive consultation with key community partners and highlight the voices of Indigenous led, Black-led, 2SLGBTQ -led organizations, and are guided by the voices of people with lived experience of mental health and substance use. For Gerstein, this pilot is an extension of the crisis work that has been imbedded within our core principles and values for over 30 years - to provide community-based crisis intervention that is guided by the needs, wishes, experience and strengths of people experiencing a mental health crisis.

The anchor partners across the City of Toronto include Gerstein Crisis Centre (police Division 51), TAIBU (Division 42 and 43), CMHA (Division 23 and 31), and 2- Spirited People of the First Nations (Division 14). TCCS provides a community-based, non-coercive alternative for responding to mental health crises, utilizing a client-centred, trauma-informed response as an alternative to unnecessary police or Hospital Emergency Department interactions.

Crisis Workers at TCCS are available 24/7 and are able to provide unique and timely crisis support to the community. Individuals in crisis or someone concerned about another person can connect by calling 211 or Gerstein on Charles. Gerstein also has co-located crisis workers at the 911 call centre to respond to callers diverted from 911 directly. TCCS can provide up to 3 months of follow-up crisis support and assistance connecting to community partners such as The Access Point and Family Services for short-term counselling. As our Pilot continues to build, so do our partnerships, ensuring we are able to provide services that best reflect the needs and wants of the communities we serve.

In the month of September, the TCCS overall surpassed 2,000 dispatches for service across the Pilot, with Gerstein’s TCCS mobile team responding to more than 850 crisis calls. Gerstein looks forward to continuing to be a partner in this integral community service and continuing to be at the forefront of accessible, community-based crisis support for our communities.



"When people have a physical health emergency, their first stop for fulfilling their needs is through a healthcare provider, not the police. The same should be the case with mental health."

Elaine Amsterdam, Director of Municipal & Community Partnerships



**Toronto
Community
Crisis Service**

911 Crisis Call Diversion Project Goes 24-hours and City Wide!

The Gerstein Crisis Centre (GCC) has partnered with the Toronto Police Service (TPS) to provide an alternative response for non-emergent mental health-related calls.

The 911 Crisis Call Diversion Pilot Project is designed to divert mental health calls away from police responses. Since October 4, 2021, GCC crisis workers are embedded in the 911 call centre 20 hours a day, 7 days a week, responding to non-emergency mental health-related calls from Divisions 14, 51 and 52. Crisis workers provide the immediate support and intervention needed during mental health crises and connect and monitor individuals with relevant community support services.

The project was designed as a one-year pilot, but on June 22, 2022, TPS and GCC announced in principle an extension for a second year. This pilot extension supports the report tabled by Toronto's Auditor General: "Review of the TPS – Opportunities to Support More Effective Responses to Calls for Service," which outlines the need to explore alternative models of police response where appropriate. The project also aligns with the TPS Board's 81 Recommendations on Police Reform, calling for the development of alternative models of community safety responses for mental health calls for service.

The second year of the project will expand to all police divisions across the city, and the GCC will increase their service hours from 20 to 24 hours a day. For more than 30 years, GCC has been providing Toronto communities with safe, humane, equity-based crisis services to people where and when they need them. This partnership with TPS provides the appropriate, immediate support and intervention needed during a mental health crisis to better serve the citizens of Toronto.



"There are multiple entry points to how people access support and 911 is one of them. So, being co-located in the communication centre allows us to support callers looking for crisis support directly and assist the call operators on options for diversion."

Carla Pearson, Manager, TPS 911 Co-location Project

Respecting Peoples' Strengths and Their Ability to Make Decisions About Their Lives

Human Rights Watch is an internationally respected organization that investigates and reports on abuses happening all around the world, working for the protection of those most at risk, from vulnerable minorities and civilians during wartime, to refugees and children in need. They are an organization of advocacy and action with partners around the World. In December of 2021, Human Rights Watch released a [web feature and video](#) featuring Gerstein Crisis Centre - highlighting our model as an alternative way to address mental health crises that avoids resorting to policing and better protects people's rights. The web feature was part of a new initiative by Human Rights Watch to highlight good practices as a way to encourage governments and community-based organizations to implement policies and practices that are human rights respecting.

We are proud and excited to work alongside Human Rights Watch to contribute to the development of rights - based practices that better serve those experiencing mental health and substance use crisis and remain rooted in the strengths and experiences of the communities in which they serve.

“The first step toward mental health recovery should be having control over your own coping mechanisms without forcing anything. Even though people are having a crisis, they know best about what their situation is.”

Crisis Intervention Worker at
Gerstein Crisis Centre.

Strengthening our Approach to Anti-Racism

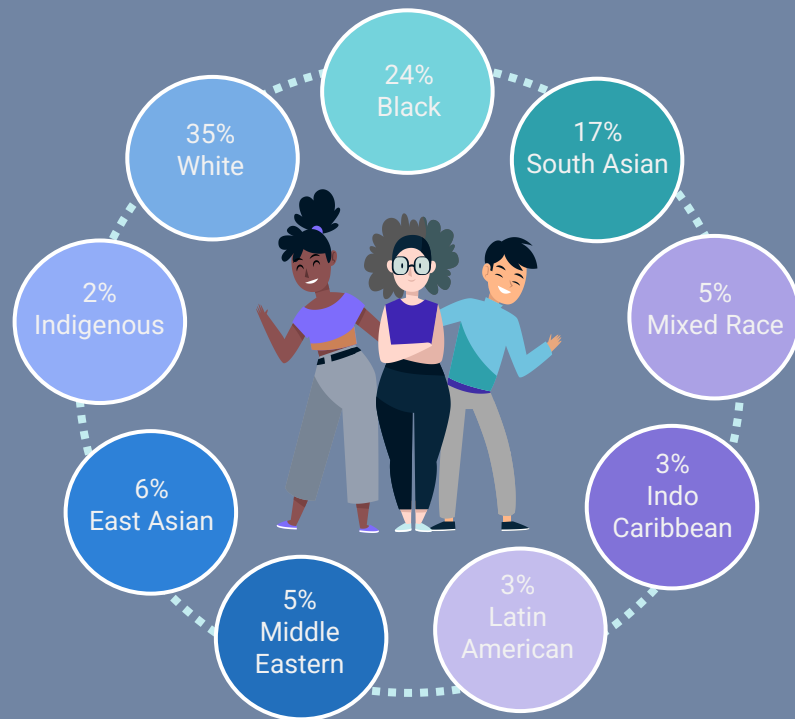
Since its inception, Gerstein Crisis Centre has worked toward achieving a welcoming and safer space for our community and continues to be guided by the voices, experiences and expertise of those with lived experiences. There is still much work to be done. We recognize the need for critical analysis of our own role in upholding systemic injustices and practices both as an organization within the wider system and as individuals who share space within the community.

This year, Gerstein Crisis Centre has worked with a consultant to do an Audit of the organization through an Anti-Black Racism lens. A work plan has been generated to address any recommendations that were made and staff have come together to create space to monitor and maintain a strong focus on the work as we move forward. Creating an environment of self reflection, open communication and taking care of everyone through this process remains a priority.

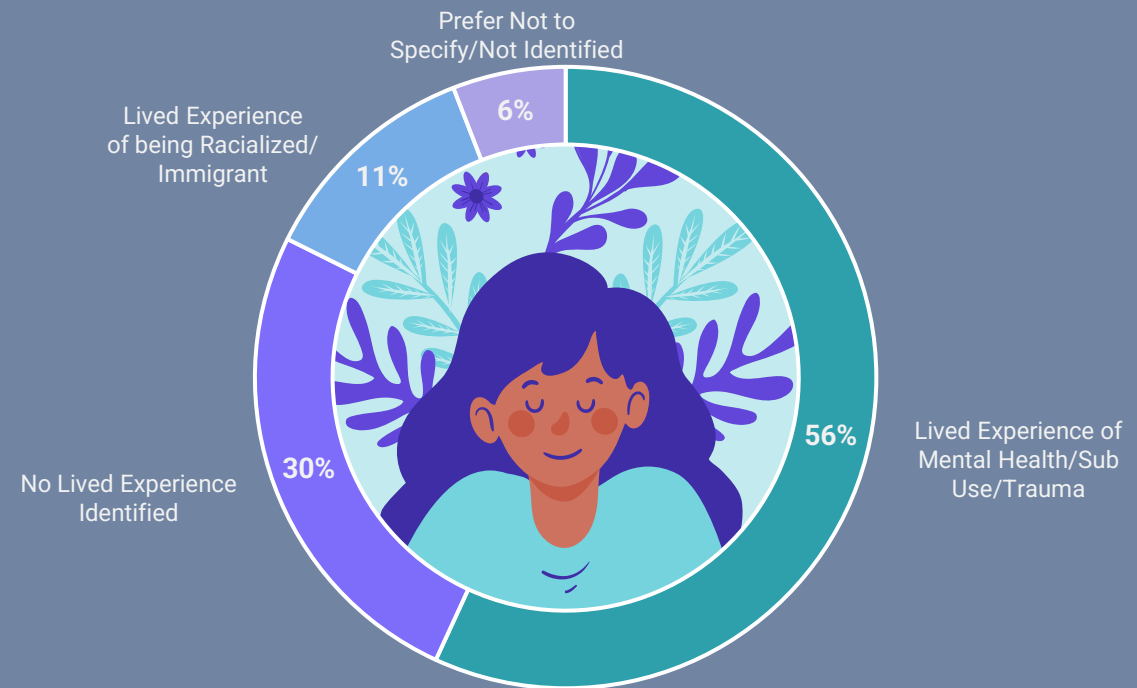
In 2022, we conducted a survey with staff to understand the demographic make-up of our team and to measure that against our hiring and service goals to include lived experience and to have our staff reflect the communities we serve. See the findings below.

Who is on our Team: Crisis Workers Demographics

Race-Based



Lived Experience



Responding to Crisis in the Community



Over 30 Years of Community-Based Crisis Response

30 years later, still providing community-based Crisis Intervention, every day, 24 hours a day across the City of Toronto.

Gerstein on Charles and Gerstein on Bloor make up the core of our services and have experienced Crisis Workers who have been with us many years, including throughout the pandemic.

They continue to support the community and have been integral to our recent expansions, especially with their support of the new initiatives.

Our Staff

In appreciation of our incredible team, thank you for all that you do!

30 years +

Adriana
Collette
Darna
Elaine
Grace
Kinsi
Leandro
Lee
Michael
Nicki
Susan

25 years +

Ehsan
Pamela
Vicki

10 years +

Angela
Balazs
David
Frank
Jacqui
Laura
Lesia
Maha
Mark
Michelle
Nur
Paul

20 years +

Heather

5 years +

Alyssa
Azher
Eric
Everton
Kaola
Williams
Linda
Louise
Mary
Mostafa
Nelson
Seth-Adrian
Tasia
Vesela

15 years +

Alina
Alison
Laura P.
Melissa
Sim





33,175 Crisis Calls



2,624 Crisis Visits



317 House Stays

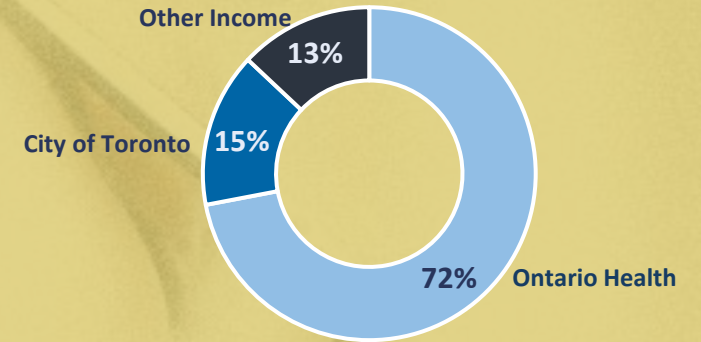


Over 101 Wellness & Recovery Group Sessions

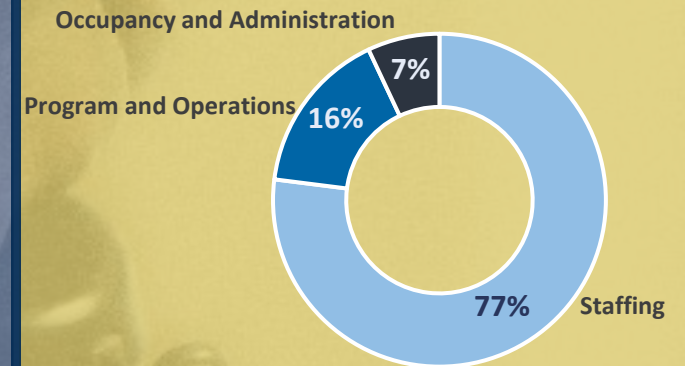


Over 500 Trained in Crisis & Suicide Intervention

REVENUE



EXPENSES



Board of Directors

Lisa Manuel (Chair)

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Adiba Jafar

Angela Nyamweya

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Desmond Rowley

Hricha Rakshit

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

Bertrand Gerstein Family Foundation

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PayPal Giving Fund

Philip Smith Foundation

Special thank you to **Q30 designs inc.** for their ongoing support and partnership

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

We appreciate your support and words of encouragement!

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Messages from our Donors:

"You all help save lives, including mine. Some of the nicest people worth getting to know. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Truly, angels just a phone call away."

"Thank you for all that you do to help people in crisis."

"We appreciate all that you do and have done over the past several years. You have had a profound impact on the Toronto community - thank you for your ongoing commitment, great work and contribution."



[Twitter.com/GersteinCrisis](https://twitter.com/GersteinCrisis)



[Gersteincentre.org](https://www.gersteincentre.org)