Gerstein Crisis Centre

ANNUAL REPORT

2026



STRENGTH, HOPE & COMMUNITY

At Gerstein Crisis Centre, we know that when a crisis blurs the path ahead, hope starts with someone showing up. Gerstein Centre meets people across Toronto where they are—where they live, gather, travel, and look for support—with care that is accessible and compassionate.

Our new Strategic Plan sets our path forward for 2026–2031. Shaped through extensive listening and engagement, it reflects what has always been at the heart of our work: accessible, community-based crisis and recovery support guided by lived experience and grounded in equity, choice, and belonging. It's dual focus—strengthening our core and contributing to broader system change—will guide how we support our teams, deepen partnerships, and help advance a strengths- and rights-based crisis response.

This year, we improved access by bringing our approach into the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and expanding to more Toronto Public Library branches. Through our collaboration with the HART Hubs, we enhanced our reach to people navigating overlapping realities such as the housing crisis, poverty, substance use, isolation, criminalization, and limited access to safe and timely supports. These partnerships help people connect with trauma-informed support in places they already move through, learn, gather, and seek safety—making community-based crisis response more visible across Toronto.



Susan and Katie

Message from the Board Chair & Executive Director

"What continues to inspire me most about Gerstein is the care, courage, and humanity I see in this organization every day. In a year that asked us to stay grounded and responsive, our staff, service users, partners, and community reminded us that meaningful crisis support begins with relationships, dignity, choice, and a deep belief that every person deserves to feel safe, respected, and connected."

— Katie Almond, Board Chair

Crisis support means responding in the moment and acknowledging the inequities that shape people's lives. That's why anti-racism, anti-oppression, and truth and reconciliation are an integral part of how we work, calling us to keep learning, reflecting, and acting across our governance, leadership, partnerships, policies, and services. As we move forward, we remain committed to addressing systemic barriers, honouring Indigenous rights and histories, centring lived and living experience, and building services and workplaces where dignity, safety, and belonging are actively protected.

Some of this year's most meaningful moments were the ones that helped people connect. Through Finding Recovery through Exercise Skills and Hope (F.R.E.S.H.) Activities and Trips, participants shared meaningful experiences beyond the usual routines of service delivery—spending time together in nature and other welcoming settings, and building relationships grounded in mutual support. These moments remind us that support goes beyond urgent needs; it also means nurturing building new skills, connection and hope.

Strength, hope and community are built when we work together. We are grateful to the people and communities who guide us, to our staff who show up with skill and heart everyday, and to our many partners who help people find their way to the support they need.

With respect and gratitude,

Katie Almond
Board Chair

Susan Davis
Executive Director

OUR COMMITMENTS TO TRUTH & RECONCILIATION

As part of our ongoing journey toward reconciliation, the Gerstein Crisis Centre commits to:

Building Cultural Safety We will provide ongoing staff education and training grounded in cultural humility, Indigenous histories, and trauma-informed care.

Creating Culturally Safe Spaces We will work to ensure our services are inclusive, accessible, and safe for Indigenous clients, guided by the expertise and voices of Indigenous communities.

Supporting Indigenous-Led Initiatives We will seek partnerships with Indigenous mental health organizations and advocate for equitable funding and representation in the mental health sector.

Upholding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action
In particular, we commit to:

> **Call to Action 22:** Recognizing the value of Indigenous healing practices and collaborating with Elders and Knowledge Keepers in crisis support where appropriate.
>
> **Call to Action 23:** Increasing the number of Indigenous professionals in health care and providing opportunities for Indigenous staff to grow and lead.
>
> **Call to Action 57:** Ensuring our staff receive education on the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, Indigenous rights, and Aboriginal–Crown relations.

Raising Awareness of the 94 Calls to Action
We are committed to making the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action more visible within our organization and community. As part of this commitment, we will read two Calls to Action aloud at the end of each land acknowledgement, to keep their urgency and importance at the forefront of our collective attention.

Listening and Learning
We are committed to ongoing dialogue with Indigenous communities and welcome feedback, correction, and guidance as we strive to become more accountable and inclusive.

Consultants: *Laura Paquette, Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation of Kebaowek First Nation, Michelle Paquette, Ojibwe, Algonquin of Scugog First Nation & Kebaowek First Nation. Danielle Migwans, Ojibwe from M'Chigeeng First Nation*

Read a full copy of our Land Acknowledgement here:
Gerstein Crisis Centre Land Acknowledgement



Gerstein Crisis Centre Staff Member

TORONTO COMMUNITY CRISIS SERVICE (TCCS) - TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION (TTC) PILOT PROJECT

Background

Since November 2025, the TCCS TTC project has been working in the downtown “U” of TTC Line 1, providing additional support for people experiencing mental health crises, often at the intersection of substance use, homelessness, and poverty. Working collaboratively with TTC staff, Special Constables, Streets to Homes, and the Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (M-DOT), our dedicated team has built strong relationships with riders and staff and reached many people throughout the project’s first year. By improving access to care where and when it is needed most, the project is helping to build a more caring city where well-being for all matters.

Community Engagement Interactions

→ 5,580

Wellbeing checks & crisis responses

→ 348

Average response time

→ 5 Minutes

* Data from Project Launch Nov.15, 2025 - Mar. 31, 2026



Gerstein Crisis Centre Staff Working in the Subway

HART HUBS

Gerstein Crisis Workers Strengthen HART Hub Community Supports

Over the past year, Gerstein Crisis Centre strengthened its partnerships with Regent Park Community Health Centre and South Riverdale Community Health Centre through the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub initiative.

Two Gerstein HART Hub Crisis Workers work alongside community health centre teams and service partners to provide timely, compassionate and coordinated support to people experiencing mental health, substance use and other complex crises in familiar, accessible community settings.

Based on each person's needs, the Crisis Workers connect HART Hub clients with Gerstein's broader continuum of care, including telephone crisis support, mobile crisis intervention, short-term crisis beds, substance use crisis services and follow-up support, as well as other community-based resources. These connections support continuity of care beyond the initial HART Hub contact.

Close collaboration with interdisciplinary teams at both health centres supports whole-person care, shared expertise and fewer barriers between crisis, health and social services. It also enables earlier intervention to help prevent crises from escalating and reduce avoidable reliance on hospital emergency departments and emergency services.

This year, the two HART Hub Crisis Workers will facilitate SMART Recovery groups, offering a practical, evidence-informed and supportive environment where participants can strengthen motivation, develop coping strategies and build skills to manage substance use and other challenging behaviours.

Gerstein's participation reflects our commitment to low-barrier, trauma-informed and person-centred crisis care, grounded in reducing harm, recovery-oriented practice and respect for each person's goals, choices and lived experience.



Gerstein Crisis Centre Substance Use Crisis Team/Hart Hubs Manager on the phone

FINDING RECOVERY THROUGH EXERCISE SKILLS & HOPE (F.R.E.S.H.) TRIPS:

Finding Recovery through Exercise Skills and Hope (FRESH) focuses on creating opportunities for **Building Connections, Getting Active & Strengthening Recovery.** In the past year FRESH organized 3 trips that provided these opportunities:

Toronto Island Trip

A trip to Wards Island took place in late September. This Toronto Island trip similar to previous years was well attended. Participants enjoyed the day away from the city and too part in the engaging activities that were played.

Boundless Adventure Trip

This adventure trip involved 15 clients from both FRESH and Toronto Public Library (TPL) who were treated to 5 days of activities and fun!

They stayed in beautiful wood cabins connected to a great room where the Boundless staff provided entertainment and activities including live music, self-esteem-building games and an interactive Who Done It mystery. Clients were assigned a character and given the opportunity to dress and participate in this fun mystery game.

The Boundless Adventure team assigned the Gerstein Crisis Centre group a cook, who ensured that meals were healthy and delicious. Activities during the day included hiking, canoeing, archery, and axe throwing. Clients also had the opportunity to participate in white-water rafting and extended canoe trips and some even swam in the rapids.



FRESH participants trying something new at the Boundless Adventure Trip

Canoeing on Humber - Laurenne Kredentser Fund

The Humber River Canoe Trip enabled 14 clients to canoe down the Humber River. The participants also had the opportunity to be entertained by local musicians, and they enjoyed the music while resting in their canoes.

A huge thank you to the Kredentser family for making this trip possible through the Laurenne Kredentser Fund.



FRESH participants enjoying this year's outings

Thank you to our many partners who help us connect people to the supports they need.

WELLNESS

The Joint Health and Safety (JH&S) Committee continues to meet quarterly, with representation from each program site across the organization. In recognition of the growing importance of psychological health and safety in the workplace, a dedicated Psychological Well-Being Subcommittee was established through JH&S. This group meets every two months and focuses on promoting staff wellness, identifying opportunities to support employee well-being, and guiding the development of training and educational initiatives.

Gerstein maintains an organizational membership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI), providing all staff with access to a wide range of learning resources, educational materials, webinars, and community events focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging. This resource supports continuous learning and helps strengthen our commitment to creating an inclusive workplace culture.

GloW / Your Health Space Staff participated in organization-wide training focused on moral distress, helping teams build awareness, resilience, and practical strategies for navigating the emotional challenges that can arise in crisis and community-based mental health work.



EQUITY



Community Impact:

Gerstein Crisis Centre has grown to reach communities across Toronto, meeting people where they are and when they need us. With this growth comes a continuing responsibility to ensure that all communities can access our services. Our commitment remains simple and essential: to show up, listen, respect and connect. We now have more than 200 staff, the majority of whom are Crisis Workers. We are deeply grateful for the care and dedication our staff bring to their work—taking time to listen, understand and help people access the supports they need. We also thank the people who reach out to us for their trust, and our many partners for helping build a network of support for people living with mental health and substance use challenges. Together, we remain committed to creating softer landings and supporting the well-being of the communities we serve.

"Our commitment remains simple and essential: to show up, listen, respect and connect."

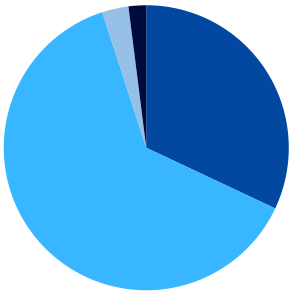
Equity Practices in Hiring:

At Gerstein Crisis Centre, we are committed to fostering a workforce that reflects the diversity, strengths, and lived experiences of the communities we serve. We strive to create equitable and accessible recruitment processes that reduce barriers to employment and encourage applications from individuals from equity-deserving communities. Accessibility accommodations are available throughout all stages of the hiring process, and selection decisions are guided by our commitment to diversity, inclusion, cultural responsiveness, and the value of lived / living experience. To support fair and balanced hiring practices, interview panels often include representation from multiple levels of the organization, including leadership, management, and frontline staff, ensuring a variety of perspectives are included in the recruitment process.

GERSTEIN BY NUMBERS

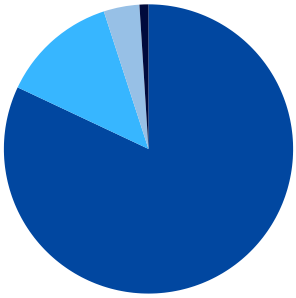
Revenue

- **32%** Provincial (Ontario Health)
- **63%** Municipal
- **3%** Federal
- **2%** Other Income



Expenses

- **82%** Salaries & Benefits
- **13%** Program Operations
- **4%** Contracted Services (including services provided by community partners)
- **1%** Professional Fees, Amortization



Crisis Calls

→ 33,179

Mobile Visits

→ 12,216

House Stays

→ 706

Trained in Crisis & Suicide Prevention

→ Over 1,500

Wellness & Recovery Group Sessions

→ Over 1,800



TRAINING & EDUCATION

Global Learning Exchange

The Global Leadership Exchange brought together leaders in mental health, disability and substance use from around the world to share community-driven practices and strengthen partnerships. As a co-host of the Toronto exchange, Gerstein Crisis Centre joined research and community partners to showcase the value of community ownership, organizational independence and collaboration. Through site visits, panels and dialogue, participants explored how rights-based, trauma-informed organizations can remain grounded in community values while building evidence, advancing systemic change and expanding their impact.



Artist Kathryn Maxfield's rendition of the conversation at the Global Learning Exchange, July 7, 2026

Beyond the Workshop: Bringing Learning Into Practice

At Gerstein Crisis Centre, we know a workshop is only the beginning; the real test is whether new learning can be put into practice. This year, our Training and Education team focused on that next step, helping staff carry their learning back into the day-to-day realities of crisis work.

New manager-led Team Practice Discussions draw on the experience already within our teams, helping staff examine decisions, hear different perspectives, and build shared ways of working before, during, and after a call. Topics to date include consent, capacity and refusal of service; team readiness; and staying in sync as situations change.

We have also begun developing short, self-paced Interactive Practice Scenarios. The scenarios unfold much like an actual call. Information appears gradually and staff are asked to notice what is happening, consider what they may be assuming, make decisions with the information they have, and reconsider as the situation changes. Early scenarios include Before the Door Opens, The Door Opens, Learning After an Incident, and The Ride.

The longer-term goal is to give training a place to land in the workplace. It gives staff repeated opportunities to strengthen critical thinking, judgment and decision-making, while building clearer ways for teams to prepare, communicate, adapt and reflect together.

RESEARCH: ADVANCE OUR MODEL & SHAPE THE FUTURE OF CRISIS CARE

Toronto Metropolitan University: Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) Research Project

Our collaborative research with Toronto Metropolitan University and CERC explores how voluntary, community-based crisis support can respond to people's needs while respecting their rights, dignity and choices. Ensuring confidentiality and drawing on Gerstein Crisis Centre client records, service-user surveys and interviews with crisis workers, the findings highlight the importance of compassionate listening, lived-experience expertise, collaborative planning and practical connections to housing, income, health and community supports. The paper illustrates how integrated crisis lines, mobile teams, short-term crisis beds and follow-up services can offer flexible, non-police pathways to support, shaped by each person's priorities. It also identifies persistent barriers, including housing shortages, limited-service capacity and gaps in public awareness and coordination. Together, these findings reinforce the need for sustained investment in accessible, non-coercive crisis care and the essential social services that help people build stability, connection and well-being beyond an immediate crisis. Report to be published soon.



Gerstein Crisis Centre Staff & TMU Researchers at the TMU - CERC Research Validation Event

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