



# 2019-2020 Annual Report

Celebrating 50 Years of  
Service to the Community



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## President's Message

During the past year, we continued to celebrate the Distress Centre of Ottawa Region's (DCOR) 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In our last annual statement, I stated my confidence in our ability to “overcome any challenge” as we strive to meet the needs of the coming 50 years. Little did we know that this ability would be tested so quickly, or so vigorously. The COVID-19 pandemic has strained our social constructs, severely stretched our mental health support systems, and required most organizations to implement new operational methodologies in order to survive.

At DCOR, our staff were more than up to the challenges. Seeing the imminent need to have our call centre volunteers work virtually as the pandemic worsened, they were able to implement a remote response solution that allowed us to continue delivering services uninterrupted throughout these uncertain times. By the time the City of Ottawa mandated all offices to be shut down for all but essential personnel, our volunteers were already answering a record number of calls from the safety and security of their homes while maintaining our exceptionally quality services. While this is an extraordinary achievement, it has come at a cost. Our staff have been working overtime to manage the new remote phone services; support the incoming flood of calls from our communities; develop new remote training methods for incoming volunteers; develop new training plans for our community ASIST workshops so they can be delivered by video conference; and address the ever increasing requests for new services. All this is being accomplished while having to deal with the complexities of their own personal situations. The Board expresses our heartfelt gratitude for the amazing dedication and resilience each and every member of the DCOR staff have demonstrated. Thank you for all that you do, every day of the year!



The pandemic has further required us to cancel numerous future community and fundraising activities, including our annual volunteer recognition event and the Chocolate Affair Gala. This year, the Gala raised a record \$33,642 and has long been a cornerstone of our fundraising efforts. This **year's cancellation left a shortfall in our 2020-21 budget** which we were unsure how to address. However, we are pleased to share that our community has stepped in, more than doubling our donations, which has allowed us to continue to deliver services uninterrupted.

As a global community, we have also been deeply affected by systemic racism and social injustice. The horrific death of George Floyd in the US galvanized the Black Lives Matter movement across North America and around the world. Long overdue here in Canada, the current focus on eliminating systemic racism in all its forms requires all of us to acknowledge our roles in the problem and act together to create meaningful and sustainable solutions. While our work in this area will not be easy, it is essential. DCOR has signaled its commitment to eliminating systemic biases in our organization and you can read about our strategies to do so later in this report.



Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, with two board members leaving this year. Suzanne Laporte, who joined us in 2016 and this past year served as board vice-president, completed her second term, and has decided to pursue other volunteer efforts. We are grateful to Suzanne who had served her first term as a volunteer on the phone lines several year ago! Salama Soluma also left the board as his business and personal commitments have taken him outside of Canada for extended periods of time. We thank both of them for their valuable service and wish them well.

We are indebted to our service partners and funders, who, despite these unprecedented times, continue their invaluable support. In particular, we would like to signal the ongoing support from the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada, Centraide Outaouais, City of Ottawa, Cornwall Community Hospital, Grey Bruce Health Services, Hawkesbury & District General Hospital, Hôpital Montfort, Northwest Territories Help Line, Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line, Ottawa Hospital, Ottawa Paramedic Service, Pembroke Regional Hospital, and United Way East Ontario.

And finally, we could never deliver the community services we do without the boundless generosity of all our volunteers. As the lifeblood of our operation, the selfless gift of their time, passion and caring is what makes our organization possible. Thank you from the entire board and staff!

This year has been mentally challenging for us all. I ask everyone to put a priority on your own mental health and wellbeing as we are best equipped to help others through their challenges when we have first helped ourselves.

Yours in health,



Peter Donnelly  
President, Board of Directors  
Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region

#### VISION

The Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region plays a key role in establishing a community where individuals in need are supported and empowered to meet **life's challenges.**

#### MISSION

Working within the continuum of mental health services, the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region contributes to a healthier and safer community by providing suicide prevention, crisis intervention, psychological stabilization, emotional support, information, referral and education services, without judgement, to individuals in need.

## The Distress Centre Team

### Board of Directors

**Peter Donnelly, President**  
Suzanne Laporte, Vice President  
Frank Cestnik, Treasurer  
Diane Lepage, Secretary

**Directors:** David de Launay, Gordon Hill,  
Linda Mouhamou, Susan Padmos,  
Shannel Rajan and Salama Soluma

### Administrative Staff

**Charles Laframboise, Executive Director**  
**Ivie Edebiri**, Wellness Check Coordinator  
**Kyla Clark**, Volunteer and Client Support Coordinator  
**Jessica Grunwald**, Manager of Volunteer Selection & Engagement  
**Judy Grunwald**, Director of Corporate Services  
**Chantal Ladouceur**, Director of Client Support and Educational Services  
**Leslie Scott**, Manager of Media, Marketing and Communications  
**Robyn Young**, Administrative Assistant

### Service Support Workers

Angela Accettura, Alexandre Belisle, Angela Falker, Liam Gareau,  
Mélanie Guénette, Kendra Hawkins, Arcade Kakunze, Isabelle  
Lafrance, Chloé Landry, Karine Major, Lydie Masengo, Alana Mistry,  
Rebecca Nagrodski, Genevieve Philippe, Elnaz Saleh, Marie-  
Jacqueline Thomas, Natalie Triemstra and Casper Watras

### Service Assistants

Sarah Church, Megan Fillier, Kyle Johnson and Casper Watras

### Wellness Check Specialists

Angela Accettura, Marie Josee Chabot, Rebecca Nagrodski and  
Elnaz Saleh

## Online Crisis Services

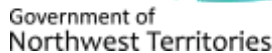
During the past year, the Distress Centre undertook to offer a new method for people in distress and crisis to use to get the help they need - that being online services. Following the approval of this delivery model by the Board of Directors, staff started working on the implementation of both chat and text options for this new target population.

Following a thorough review of software options, it was agreed that the online version of the ChatBeacon software would best serve the needs of the Distress Centre to offer chat and text communications.

While the technological aspects of the new service were being configured, staff shifted their attention to developing a training package that could be used to prepare our volunteers to respond to distress and crisis communications through chats and texts. For this task, DCOR retained the services of Barbara Ailyn who was instrumental in helping the Youth Services Bureau design and implement their training module for their chat and text service. Barbara trained all staff on the art of answering crisis chats and texts during a full-day session in October. Armed with Barbara's teachings, staff developed a training curriculum which could be integrated in the current Volunteer Training Program.

DCOR's chat and text crisis services will be launched in the summer of 2020!

### Thank You to Our Annual Funding Partners



## Staff Changes at DCOR

On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, DCOR opened its doors to two new part-time Service Assistants - Megan Fillier and Casper Watras. Both are helping review, process and provide feedback on call reports generated from the Distress Centre services, review client care plans, and assist with other agency activities.

Megan started volunteering at DCOR in 2014. She graduated with a double major in Psychology and Criminology from the University of Ottawa.

Casper first became a volunteer Responder at DCOR in February 2018 to gain insight into crisis work and front line mental health work. He graduated with a BSc (specialization in psychology) from the University of Ottawa.

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, DCOR welcomed Ivie Edebiri as its new Wellness Check and Online Services Coordinator. Ivie brings a degree in Psychology with a minor in Neuroscience and Mental Health. She previously worked as a Medical Assistant. When she is not at the office, Ivie enjoys cooking, relaxing, and watching TV. She **self-describes as happy and positive and we couldn't agree more!**



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On October 28<sup>th</sup>, DCOR welcomed Robyn Young to the office. Robyn is no stranger to DCOR as she is currently a Service Support Worker and Wellness Check Specialist. Robyn took on the position of Administrative Assistant two days per week to help with service-related tasks.

On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, DCOR promoted Chantal Ladouceur to the position of Director of Client Support and Educational Services. In this position, Chantal oversees the volunteer application screening process; oversees the volunteer training curriculum and takes part in the volunteer training program; ensures frontline volunteers have the appropriate tools to answer calls for help; ensures client care plans and service guidelines are developed and maintained; ensures call reports are reviewed and feedback is provided to **volunteers; manages a group of Leaders into the Centre's Crisis Intervention Team; seeks and manages ongoing volunteer development opportunities; and oversees and takes part in the Centre's professional training consulting services.**

Also on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, Kyla Clark was promoted to the position of Volunteer and Client Support Coordinator. In her new position, Kyla participates in the training of new recruits (including the LivingWorks ASIST workshop); supervises and supports new volunteers; prepares and maintains caller care plans; reviews call reports and provides feedback to volunteers, as required; assists in the ongoing development of **volunteers; provides training to community organizations, helps maintain DCOR's technology and telephony infrastructure; and maintains, updates and enhances the Centre's CHAOS Organized database.**

We look forward to working with our new and newly promoted employees for many years to come!





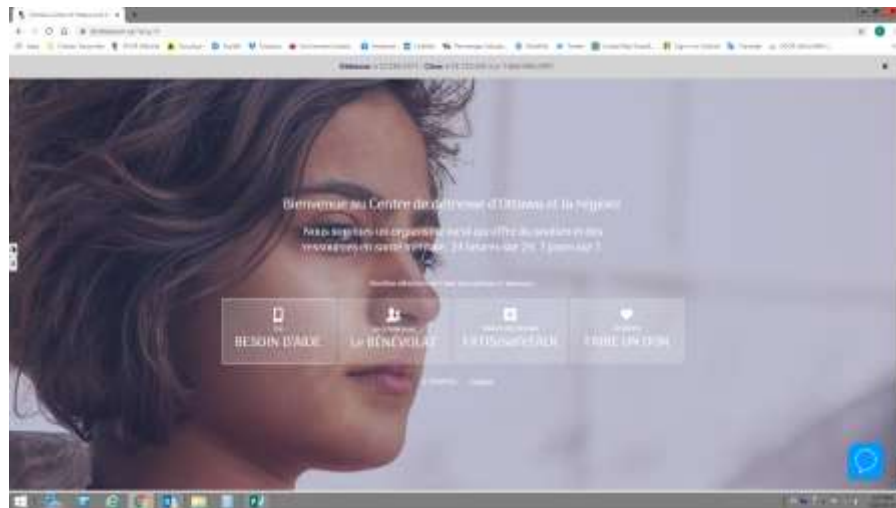
## After the Storm Awareness Campaign

In October 2018, the Distress Centre launched its “After the Storm” campaign, with radio spots on 92.3 JACK FM, 101.1 Country , 105.3 KISS FM, 106.1 CHEZ FM and 1310 News, as well as a direct mail campaign aimed at informing victims of tornadoes, floods and other tragic events that they are not alone and help is just a call away. The Distress Centre is grateful to United Way East Ontario and the Ottawa Senators Foundation for their financial support for this campaign.



## Expanding Bilingualism at DCOR

Over the past year, a team of staff and Directors, supported by dedicated translators and webmasters, worked tirelessly to tackle the translation of the Distress Centre website. It's not until you dive into such a project that you better understand just how much information is included in a simple website. Our thanks go to our Directors Diane Lepage and Suzanne Laporte who spent many hours reviewing translated text and website content. Thank you to our Manager of Media, Marketing and Communications, Leslie Scott who coordinated our efforts. This is an on-going project for DCOR but we expect its completion by the fall of 2020.



## DCOR: 50 Years of Service to the Community

Prepared by Leslie Scott

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1969, the Distress Centre of Ottawa opened for business, with 100 volunteers.

Led by Minister William Blackmore as its first President, supported by a cast of 11 Directors and its Coordinator, Patricia Delbridge, the Distress Centre embarked on a remarkable journey that would lead us to where we are today - one of the largest distress centres in Canada. Since its beginning, nearly 4,000 people have been trained to become telephone volunteers, and in so doing have answered nearly 1.3 million calls for help.

During its history, there have been many memorable moments for the Distress Centre. In 2019, the Distress Centre Team rolled up its sleeves to celebrate 50 incredible years with its clients, its funders, community partners, members, Directors, and employees. Following is a brief summary of the program that was put together over the last few months.

### 50 Donations in 50 Hours

To kick off our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, DCOR conducted a donation drive to bring in 50 donations in 50 hours. The event was launched on CTV Morning Live and Ottawa Matters.

There was no set financial goal for this initiative. This was an opportunity to raise awareness of the fact that the Distress Centre is a non-profit organization that still depends on **our community's generosity to continue offering essential services to people in need.** However, with donations coming in from \$5 to \$500, we were thrilled to reach 54 donations in less than 50 hours, totaling \$3,460 to benefit our services. Donations came through Facebook, through our website and by telephone.

We thank everyone who helped spread the word about this event through their social media networks! A special "Thank You" to our generous donors who continue to support DCOR in its efforts to help people in need!



**It's our 50th anniversary!**

Help us kick off this year-long celebration with our  
**50 Donations in 50 Hours!**

Make *any sized* monetary donation from March 19-21  
to help keep our services open for another 50 years!

[www.dcottawa.on.ca/donate](http://www.dcottawa.on.ca/donate)



## Chocolate Affair Gala

To truly celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, our Chocolate Affair Gala was the place to be! We welcomed more than 300 guests to the event that featured chocolate, chocolate and more chocolate! We featured products from local artisans to showcase the variety available in our community, pleased taste buds with a chocolate fountain, and thanked everyone with a chocolate sugar cookie adorned with our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary message.

Jeff Hopper and Sophie Moroz from Ottawa's New Country 94 were our Masters of ceremonies. Deputy Mayor Matthew Luloff welcomed our guests. Our President, Peter Donnelly spoke about DCOR - 2019 version before introducing Pat Hayles (nee Delbridge). **The Distress Centre's first Executive Director took us down** memory lane. What a treat it was to listen to Pat tell us about the events that led to the creation of this vital service for people in need, and to see her reunited with former colleagues and volunteers.

The event boasted a four-course chocolate infused dinner, entertainment by a local DJ, sweet chocolate treats by local chocolatiers (Alicja Confections, Fruit Couture, Hummingbird Chocolates, JoJo CoCo and Bisou Dates & Chocolate), a silent auction and a raffle draw with amazing prizes! We also welcomed Canadian country singer/songwriter Madeline Merlo who sang her hit song

**"War Paint".**



Madeline Merlo stopped in to entertain a very appreciative crowd .

Our Guest Speaker was John Mielke, a local broadcast entrepreneur social media strategist, coach, idea originator, voice talent, as well as client and supporter of DCOR, who spoke about living with depression and how DCOR helped him through two suicide attempts.

We raffled off a trip for two anywhere WestJet flies, as well as other amazing prizes. After the dinner and the silent auction, guests were up and dancing on the dance floor until the event closed down.



John Mielke spoke about living with depression and the support he received from DCOR.



Pat Delbridge (left), first Executive Director for the Distress Centre; Pat Hayles (right) addressing the crowd at the Chocolate Affair Gala.

We were happy to welcome Conlin Bedard LLP to the event as our Chocolate Fountain Sponsor. We also welcomed Richardson GMP as our Gift Bag Sponsor and Oegema Nicholson Financial Inc. as an Auction Table Sponsor. The Shaw Centre was Venue sponsor while CTV & Bell Media were Media sponsor.



## The Start: March 17, 1969

### REDBLACKS Wood Cookie



On July 5<sup>th</sup>, as part of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, the RED-BLACKS presented DCOR with their commemorative “Wood Cookie” as a token of their appreciation for our services. The wood cookie was presented on the field during the REDBLACKS game, with our friend and supporter John Mielke who credits our services for saving his life twice.



John Mielke and Leslie Scott receiving the commemorative “Wood Cookie” from the REDBLACKS.

### Canadian Blood Services Blood Drive

On July 19<sup>th</sup>, in keeping with the theme of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, DCOR decided to host a blood drive in collaboration with the Canadian Blood Services that took place at Ottawa City Hall. Staff and volunteers helped to bring in donors, manage the refreshment table and speak with individuals about volunteering at the Distress Centre. With 77 donations over the course of the day, it was a successful blood drive, helping us save lives in a different way.

Thank you to those of you who were able to open your schedules to attend and help support the clinic, either by donating blood or by volunteering your time (or both)!



DCOR staff and Directors standing by the Distress Centre booth following a successful blood drive at Ottawa City Hall, as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.



## Mindful Ink 3.0



Once again, Free World Tattoo partnered with DCOR to host another edition of **“Mindful Ink 3.0”** which took place February 22-23 at the Free World Tattoo shop. Scheduled appointments for the event sold out in a few hours. During the event, 6 artists tattooed more than 200 people over the course of two days, all in the name of mental health. Participants could choose from a list of 20 pre-designed tattoos (10 new and 10 from previous years) displaying positive mental health connotations, pay \$100 and have it tattooed on their person (Free World Tattoo donated a portion of the proceeds to DCOR). There were many repeat participants and many new ones came out as well. This event raised more than \$14,000 in support of DCOR’s 24/7 services.



# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at DCOR

Prepared by Gérard Étienne and Linda Mouhamou

Over the past year, DCOR has engaged meaningfully with our Pro Bono Consultant, Gérard Étienne, in a process to understand better how to implement a strategy on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)<sup>1</sup> in everything the Center does. We have selected a vision that focuses on first conducting a complete systems audit (the written and unwritten policies and practices) to identify and remove any barriers that exist. Once this framework is in place, we hope to collect EDI-related data which will help lead the way to the third part of our plan, which is to focus on increasing representation with set targets. To stay true to our guiding principles, we commit to being accountable and transparent by measuring our progress and activities and publishing them annually.



<sup>1</sup> **Equity** (not equality): the removal of barriers to address imbalances among different groups of people. **Diversity**: the representation of racialized and marginalized individuals. **Inclusion**: ensuring different identities are valued, leveraged and welcomed within a given setting to give everyone a sense of belonging.



## We Stand Against Systemic Discrimination. We Stand with **Black Lives Matter** & **Idle No More**.

As a community organization, events since the murder of George Floyd, including those closer to home, have moved us to reflect on the need to deepen our commitment to condemning and eliminating anti-Black, anti-Indigenous racism and all forms of discrimination.

Systemic racism exists within all Canadian institutions, including our own. Its ongoing negative impact is **eroding the public's trust and confidence in many of our organizations**. **Not addressing systemic racism** is not only failing our communities, but it also puts them at risk. Inequity and mental health issues often intersect and can be experienced simultaneously, such as poverty, racialization, or marginalization. This intersectionality poses added challenges at the individual, community and health systems levels.

**A common misconception about systemic racism is that it involves a few “bad apples”.** This is not true because imperfectly good people can commit acts of omission that allow individual racists to survive and even thrive in organizations. Imperfectly good people can also consciously or unconsciously enable systems to create and perpetuate policies and practices that work to the advantage of some groups and the disadvantage of others.

Raising these issues will be crucial to ensure that DCOR remains an organization that we can continue to be proud of. Values of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) must be at the heart of everything we do. And we are committed to doing more, to do better and to do things differently. We will listen, learn, unlearn and collaborate in our efforts to build a better way forward together. It is important that we engage in a meaningful dialogue on the need for change, that we check-in and listen to each other, that we celebrate our differences and that we continue to spotlight EDI so that it permeates the fabric of DCOR.

**Much has been accomplished, but much more needs to be done. We will make mistakes, but we won't** let them hold us back or keep us silent. We will continue to work on proactively listening, dialoguing, learning, owning, partnering, co-designing and co-producing the cultural, operational and system-wide changes we need to dismantle systemic racism in our society. Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities need this. Women, the LGBTQ2+, people with disabilities, newcomers and other marginalized groups need this. All Canadians need this as we continue to strive for an end to discrimination in all its forms.



A very special thank you to Mr. Gérard Étienne. As we accelerated our focus on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) this year, we were very fortunate to be able to work with Gérard, who is EDI Senior Associate at DiversiPro Inc.

Gérard is a passionate advocate for Human Rights and Employment Equity and deeply involved in his community. This year, he selflessly and tirelessly volunteered his time and expertise with the Distress Centre. We owe him a deep debt of gratitude, as without his leadership and guidance, we would not have achieved the progress that we have. Thank you, Gérard!



## Financial Summary

Financial summary for the year ended March 31, 2020

<b>Revenue</b>	
Mental Health Crisis Lines	\$558,903
Distress/Help Lines	311,353
Emergency Support Line for Paramedic Service	29,999
Ottawa Transit Crisis Service	51,567
Wellness Check Service	134,642
Individual and Corporate Donations	39,428
Professional Development Training	28,171
Fundraising Events	95,491
Interest Income	8,364
Special Grant	5,620
Bingo	<u>37,511</u>
	<b><u>1,301,049</u></b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Salaries, Benefits and Professional Development	\$817,411
Administration, Audit and Professional Fees,	
Dues and Memberships	38,931
Volunteer Recruitment	110,037
Technology, Telephony	115,135
Insurance	10,486
Rent	105,855
Volunteer Program	38,774
Fundraising	34,941
Mental Health Crisis Lines	<u>5,274</u>
	<b><u>1,276,844</u></b>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses prior to amortization</b>	
	<b>\$24,205</b>
Amortization	(18,398)
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses for the year</b>	<b><u>\$5,807</u></b>

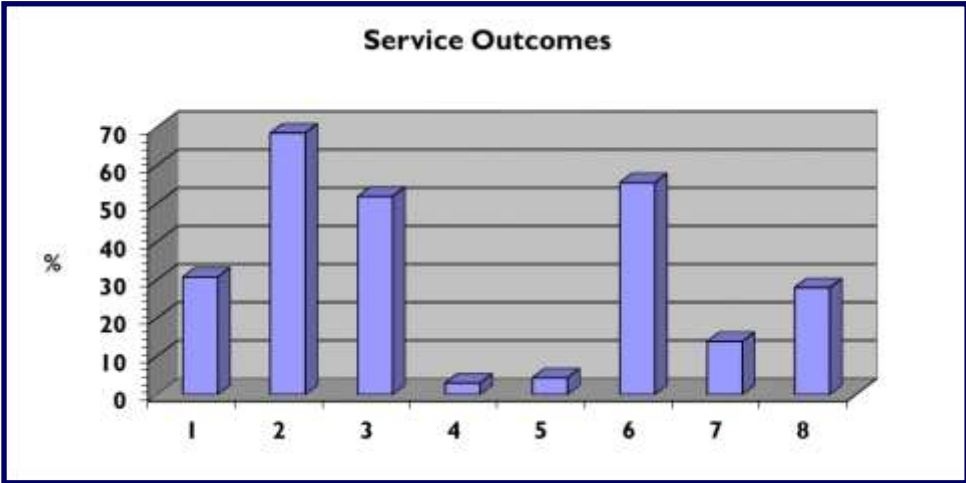
(audited financial statements are available upon written request)

## Overview of Services

90.9% of clients who contacted the Distress Centre appreciated the service they received from our Responders.

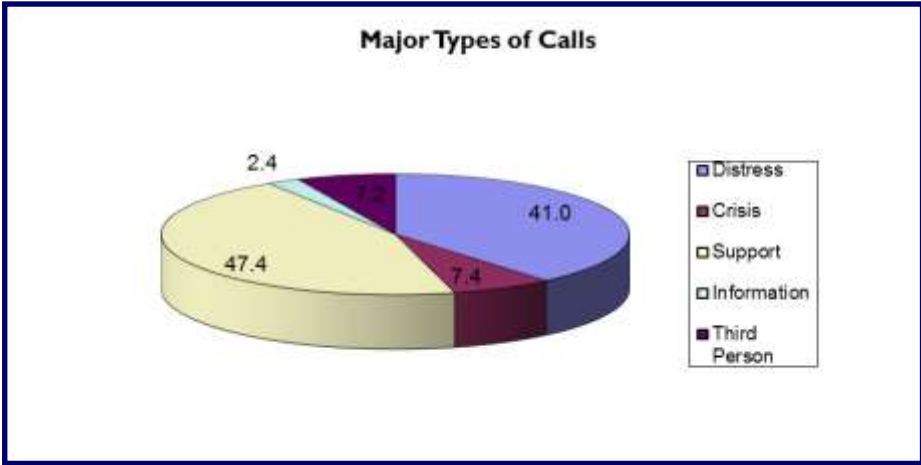


In total, the Distress Centre’s volunteer Responders answered 57,352 calls for help in 2019-2020.



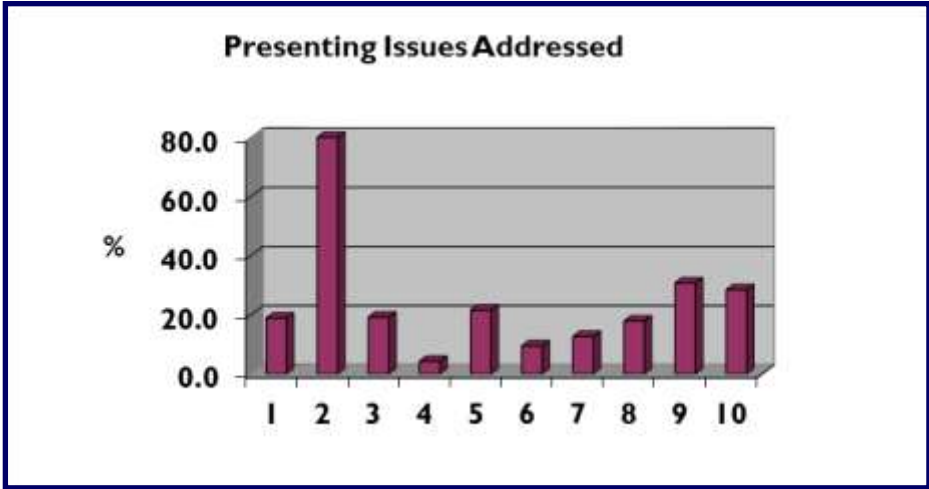
- 1 Action Plan Explored
- 2 Decrease in Isolation and Loneliness
- 3 Decrease in Distress / Anxiety Level
- 4 Decrease in Risk to Self or Others
- 5 Immediate Crisis Diffused
- 6 Increase in Ability to Cope
- 7 Increase in Knowledge of Resources
- 8 Increase in Self Care Coping Strategies

55.5% of clients experienced an increase in their ability to cope following their call to the Distress Centre.



From April 1 to March 31, services were provided to 5,936 youths between the ages of 16 and 24, as well as 11,459 adults between the ages of 55 and 74.

During the past year, **48.4%** of clients who contacted the Distress Centre were either in distress or in crisis.

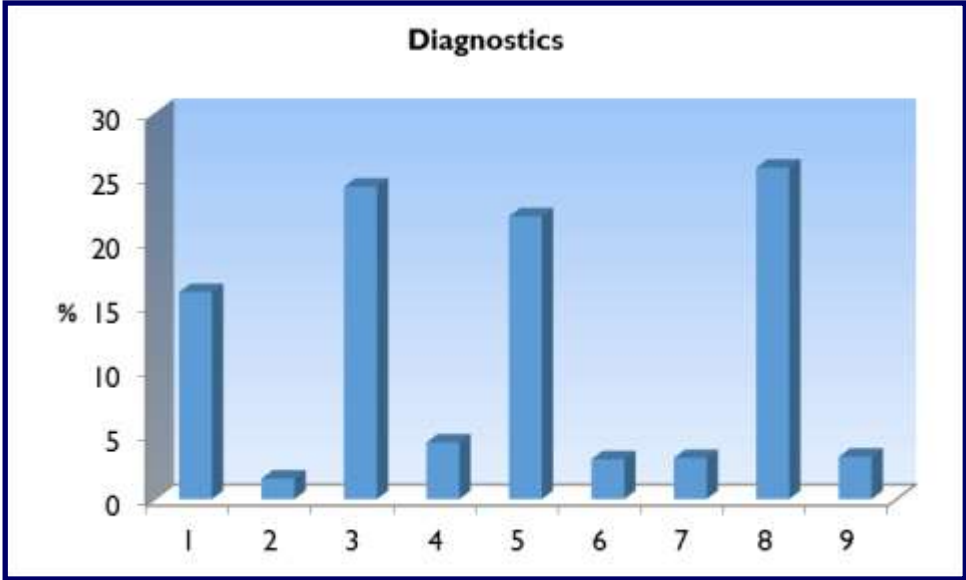


31% of clients who contacted the Distress Centre in the last 12 months were dealing with relationship issues.

- 1 - Threat to Others / Attempted Suicide
- 2 - Specific Symptoms of Serious Mental Illness
- 3 - Physical / Sexual Abuse
- 4 - Education
- 5 - Occupational / Employment / Vocational
- 6 - Housing
- 7 - Financial
- 8 - Legal
- 9 - Relationships
- 10 - Substance Abuse / Addictions

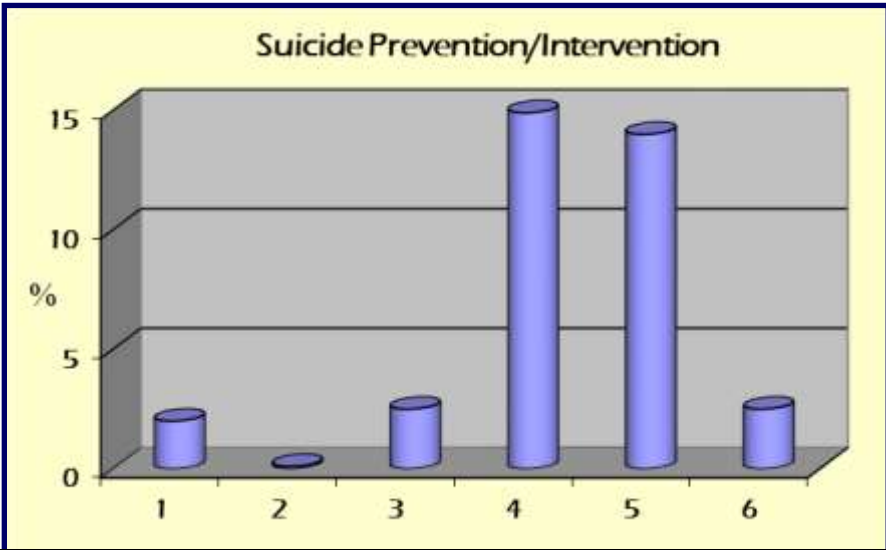


In the past year, 8,410 referrals to our community partners were provided by our Responders to clients who were in need of additional assistance and support.



- 1 - Anxiety / Panic Disorder / Phobias
- 2 - Eating Disorders
- 3 - Mood Disorder
- 4 - Personality Disorder
- 5 - Schizophrenia / Psychotic Disorder
- 6 - Sexuality
- 7 - Sleep Disorder
- 8 - Substance Addictions
- 9 - Developmental Disability

In 2019-2020, our Responders transferred 3,292 clients directly to the appropriate local Mental Health Crisis Team where more help was provided to them.

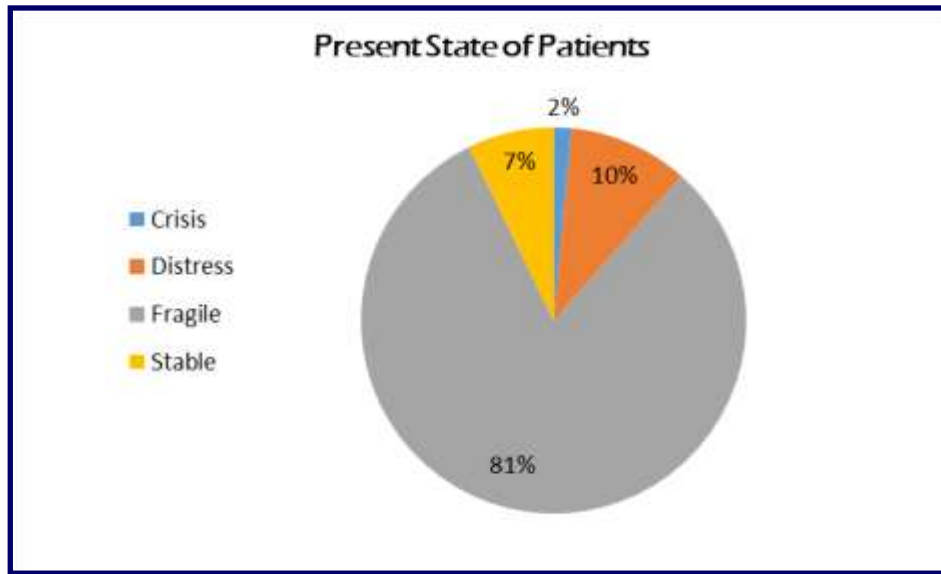


- 1 - Self Abuse / Harm
- 2 - Attempt Commenced
- 3 - Moderate to High Risk
- 4 - Ideation
- 5 - Prior Suicidal Behaviour
- 6 - Survivor of Suicide

In the past year, 7,739 calls answered by Responders were from clients who experienced suicidal thoughts and /or behaviour.

## Wellness Check Service

1,840 PATIENTS CONTACTED  
IN THE PAST YEAR FOLLOWING  
A VISIT TO THE HOSPITAL FOR A  
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE



48% of patients explored coping strategies

10% of patients expressed current suicidal ideation

Specialists explored an action plan with 56% of patients

48% of patients were in treatment for a mental health issue

In 65% of patients, there was a perceived improvement in their condition since hospitalization

81% expressed appreciation for their Wellness Check Call

55% of patients had sufficient supports to help them following a Wellness Check call



# Gauging Volunteer Satisfaction

Prepared by Linda Mouhamou

During the month of September 2019, the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region (DCOR) anonymously surveyed its Volunteers<sup>1</sup>, one of the most vital parts of our team, to better understand the factors that decrease or increase their satisfaction (and retention)<sup>2</sup>. We also sought to see how satisfaction affects Volunteers from an equity, diversity and inclusion lens.

**67.4%**  
Response Rate  
116 Volunteers



**98%**  
Satisfied or  
Very Satisfied

Highest levels:

- ✓ Volunteer Leaders
- ✓ Volunteer Impact
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Volunteer Selection Process

**95%**  
Likely or  
Very Likely



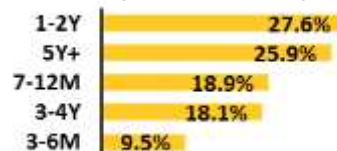
**90%+**  
Likely to continue  
volunteering at  
DCOR



+ Those satisfied with the Staff and their sense of impact are most likely

- Those under the age of 35 are least likely

### Length Volunteering



### Top 2 reasons for starting to volunteer at DCOR:

**1** Give back to the community

**2** Gain personal experience

### Volunteer Profile:

- Employed Full-time
- Female
- University Educated
- Heterosexual
- English-speaking
- Canadian-born
- Caucasian
- Young (under 34 years)
- No religious affiliation
- Able-bodied

*Our results did demonstrate a difference in satisfaction levels across sociodemographic groups; however, the small number of respondents in these sub-groups did not allow for reliable conclusions to be made.*

<sup>1</sup> Volunteers who passed the probationary period of three months. Paid Responders were not included in this survey.

<sup>2</sup> The survey was divided into eight sections: organizational culture, Volunteer selection process, Volunteer Leaders, Staff, shift scheduling, impact as a Volunteer, Volunteer interaction, and Volunteer training

<sup>3</sup> For demographic statistics, please reference the EDI section of the Annual Report.

## Volunteer Satisfaction Survey

Despite our exceptionally high satisfaction scores, we were able to highlight areas where Volunteers may appreciate DCOR taking a greater role. These areas included:

1. Shift scheduling / rescheduling
2. Transportation, neighbourhood and parking safety
3. Stress experienced and the mental health support provided
4. Social interaction among Volunteers
5. Kitchen offerings
6. In-service training (amount and selection)
7. Other: technical issues, internal communication, personalization of feedback

**Recognition of the Volunteer's specific impact was also identified as a key opportunity to highlight.**

As a direct result of the survey findings, DCOR has begun implementing a number of the recommendations brought forward. To encourage social interactions, we have scheduled more social events, either **in person or online**. A **"chat" feature has also been activated at each workstation in the Call Centre** so that Responders are able to connect with one another at any time during their shift, whether they are working from home or in the Call Centre. To enhance mental health supports and help reduce stress while in the Call Centre, bi-weekly visits by a therapy dog have been set up. A Mentorship has been created for new volunteers to help them get acquainted with the Distress Centre, understand their role, and debrief following difficult calls. A similar program is being considered for our Leaders. Personalized feedback on call reports, a suggestion box for in-service training, online training options, community partnerships on topics related to equity, diversity and inclusion are all in various stages of development.

Communication is always top of mind at the Distress Centre. Over the next few months, DCOR will be working at enhancing its communications when providing directions and instructions related to the provision of service, whether these apply online or for the Call Centre. An in-service to discuss topics of **interest and answer questions that volunteers may have will become part of our volunteers' continuing education at DCOR**. A suggestion box welcoming ideas from volunteers on a variety of topics will also be formalized shortly.

We are not stopping there! We are considering several other recommendations which may require more time. The process that we use to schedule and switch volunteer shifts will be looked at for possible **improvements**. **DCOR's telephony and technology infrastructure will also be reviewed to better accommodate a hybrid model of service delivery which includes a remote response solution.**

By hearing the voices of our Volunteers, we are better equipped to serve them and become a stronger organization as a result. We sincerely thank all those who participated in the survey!

*Please email the Executive Director ([claframboise@dcottawa.on.ca](mailto:claframboise@dcottawa.on.ca)) to request a copy of the full report.*

### The Committee

A joint Board and Staff Committee was struck in the Spring of 2019 to manage and implement the 2019 Volunteer survey: **Frank Cestnik** (DCOR Volunteer & Treasurer | Investment Advisor); **Kyla Clark** (Staff, Volunteer and Client Support Coordinator); **Chantal Ladouceur** (Staff, Director of Client Support and Educational Services); **Charles Laframboise** (Executive Director); **Linda Mouhamou**, (Director | Independent Management Consultant); **Susan Padmos** (DCOR Volunteer & Director | Retired Public Service Executive).

## COVID-19: Changing the Course of Service Delivery

**IT'S OFFICIAL!** The Distress Centre moved its operations to its remote response solution, effective Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, at 7:00 a.m. On this day, all volunteer Responders were expected to answer calls from home starting with the 7:00 a.m. shift. Staff were on hand in the office to ensure the smooth transition of calls to their individual locations.

This was a first for the Distress Centre. While we are accustomed to having our Service Support Workers answer calls from home, this was the first time that we closed the office while power and telephone services were still available to us. We had closed our office following the tornadoes when power and phone service (landlines) were no longer available. At that point, calls were being answered by our Service Support Workers only.

In preparation for this change in how we do business, we tried to maintain a system that could replicate, **as close as possible, our volunteer's experience in the Call Centre.** To do this, all volunteers were required to complete a few small tasks to ensure that their home equipment is ready and compliant with our infrastructure. A detailed set of instructions was sent to all volunteers to help everyone get through this process. Of course, staff were available throughout this process to help people get set.

The move to our remote response service model allowed us to maintain a quality service to the many individuals who greatly needed support during such unprecedented times. We are always humbled by the trust that is bestowed upon us by the community we serve, particularly during traumatic events (and this pandemic certainly fit the bill). But this new way of doing business did not come easily since there were so many changes that needed to be implemented to ensure that our remote response solution could be maintained.

For this solution to work, our staff had to take on new responsibilities to ensure that all volunteers were prepared to answer calls for help. Staff needed to be available 24/7 to help people navigate this new technology, to switch the destination of the calls to the appropriate cell phones, and to answer any questions a Responder may have throughout the day. Volunteer Responders needed to set up their cell **phone and preferred computer in order to connect remotely to DCOR's workstations, answer calls on** their cell phone in a quiet area in their home, using unfamiliar procedures and technologies to help people in distress and crisis. Leaders also needed to adapt to new procedures and technologies while having to deal to many more calls for support from Responders to answer technological questions, debrief with volunteers or undertake interventions. All of this happened at hyper speed during a very uncertain time.

But through it all, people persevered through their personal challenges to ensure that our neighbours, family and friends would receive the support they deserve during their time of need.

We thank our volunteers, our Leaders and staff for their continued support and commitment to the Distress Centre and the people we help every day. We know that this has not been easy to carry on while we have so many things going through our mind. But we also know how appreciative our community is to know that we are standing guard for those of us who need help making it through the day.

**More information to come in next year's Annual Report.**

# NOTES



# NOTES







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