

Chair's Message

During the past year Contact Niagara has continued to evolve from the position of "new kid on the block" concerning children's and developmental services to a mature organization helping to ensure access to quality services and supports. The fact that all relevant organizations are now "on board" represents a major achievement for the agency and reflects a growing appreciation within the community of the experience and resources of Contact Niagara. These developments have not always been easy and the agency still faces many challenges but the positive reaction of the many families and individuals who have sought assistance from Contact Niagara clearly indicates that the agency is fulfilling its mandate.

Many people have contributed to Contact Niagara's success. The Executive Director and the staff have done an outstanding job in breaking new ground as they respond to the inevitable challenges of working in an organization that began from scratch. The Ministry officials who have worked closely with Contact Niagara and the various service providers who cooperate with the agency as partners have been vital to Contact Niagara's success. In addition, members of the Board of Directors have provided important guidance, direction and support. I thank them all for their help.

Bill Matheson, Contact Niagara Board Chair

A Year in Review: Contact Niagara's Major Accomplishments

Over the 2001/02 fiscal year focus was placed on finalizing the implementation of the core elements of the 'system features' as outlined in "System by Design":

Single Point of Access

Considered the 'heart' of Contact Niagara's mandate, all major agencies funded by the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services across the Niagara Region are now part of the single point of access process.

Common Tool (Form) for Intake

In order to effectively support the access process, a standardized tool for gathering information at intake was developed and implemented. Known as the 'common tool for intake' it was developed by way of input from agencies across the Niagara Region. Equally important, the elements of the tool are consistent with the intake tool used by the three other Contact jurisdictions.

Our commitment is to continue to improve the tool on the basis of consumer and service provider feedback.

Coordinated Information

Resource Coordinators now routinely provide service information to callers. In fact, information calls represented 35% (944) of all calls over the 2001/02 fiscal year.

As we move to construct our new information system, general service information will become more easily accessible by Resource Coordinators on a routine basis thereby ensuring that this component of our mandate can be delivered more effectively.

Summary of Service Plan

The purpose of the "Summary of Service Plan" is to provide up to date information about the services an individual receives once an intake has been completed and forwarded to an agency. This will provide a system level understanding of how services are used. It brings us one step closer to providing the service system with high level statistical information regarding services delivered and service pressures. It is expected that this information will also support the community planning process to be implemented during the 2002/03 fiscal year.

Case Resolution

A case resolution process has been implemented for both the Children's and Developmental services system. As we work with this new process we will continue to improve our community's ability to respond to complex and urgent situations faced by individuals and families across the Niagara Region.

Most in Need Process

It is clear in the policy document "Making Services Work for People" that individuals who are 'most in need' must receive the supports and services they require. In order to implement this expectation, Contact Niagara facilitated a process across the service provider network that led to the adoption of a 'most in need' tool and process. Implementation is targeted for mid-spring 2002 in the developmental service sector. The development of an approach and tool for the children's sector will be the focus early in the new fiscal year.

Report of the Executive Director

For Contact Niagara this past year can best be described as both exciting and challenging. At our last Annual Meeting we talked about the first steps we had taken in laying the groundwork for implementation of our mandate. I am happy to say that since that time we have moved forward considerably in a number of key areas. Of singular importance is that all of the major agencies within the children's and developmental services sectors in the Niagara Region who are funded by the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services (MCFCS) are now part of the single point of entry process.

Another important milestone has been the recent development of a framework to better understand individuals who are 'most in need'. In concert with our service partners we have also begun to focus on improving our case resolution and other processes that have been developed and implemented in keeping with the mandate.

One of the greatest challenges we now face is meeting the Ministry's expectation of developing an approach that will result in a 'community service plan'. This plan is to be submitted to the Ministry on an annual basis. Our first steps were taken over the late winter and early spring of this year when we began a consultation process with the community to address two key questions: what should the service plan contain and by what process should it be developed. This work will be completed prior to summer and will guide the preparation of the inaugural plan due out by the latter part of the 2002/03 fiscal year. The overall intent of the plan is to articulate the strengths of our community service system, identify areas where services need to be developed and point to emerging trends in an effort to assist in future planning decisions.

On a final note, I believe that our achievements thus far have been the direct result of support from our Board of Directors, the hard work of all of our staff and the collaboration and cooperation extended by service providers through each phase of implementation. This strong foundation will only serve to improve our ability to meet the needs of individuals and families across the Niagara Region.

Stephen Novosedlik, Executive Director

Mission

Contact Niagara exists to make a positive difference to individuals, families and the Niagara community by providing coordinated information, community planning and access to MCFCS-funded services and supports.

Vision

Contact Niagara will be valued as an essential member of the service system and recognized by the community for its leadership, innovation, and commitment to individuals and families.

Values

Individuals and families are central to our work at Contact Niagara. Our decisions and actions are guided by our commitment to the following core values:

Integrity, Accountability, Trust

Committed to service excellence, our values will be evident in all we do. We will:

- Be open, honest and objective
- Seek input and welcome advice
- Make decisions fairly and responsibly
- Be guided by what we learn through innovation and creativity

Personal Development

We believe people are individuals, each with unique strengths, needs, feelings and thoughts. We will:

- Work with each person and family towards the achievement of individual and collective goals
- Work and act in partnership with individuals and families, and our shared communities

Respect

Recognizing and valuing the importance of partnerships, alliances and collaborative effort, we will:

- Ensure timely, flexible and appropriate responses
- Value the diversity of our communities and individuals
- Honour the privacy and dignity of others

Statistics

Analysis of the Number of Calls received by Contact Niagara:
 April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002

Intake	1170
Information	944
Residential Placement Advisory Committee	55

Board of Directors (March 2001 - March 2002)

Chair: Bill Matheson
Vice-Chair: Irene Foster
Past Chair: Art Wing
Treasurer: Paul Roberts
Secretary: Stephen Novosedlik, Executive Director
Peter Croskery
Margaret Kleinsmith
Jean Armitage
Aileen Turnbull
Wendy Luce Meyer

Contact Niagara Staff

Executive Director
Stephen Novosedlik

Team Leader
Beth Foster

Resource Coordinator
Tom Archer
Marcia Cramp
Karen Colavecchia
Ivana Wilson
Fred Steinhaus
Chris Montreuil (bilingual)
Liz Cardwell (Ontario Works Contract)
Catherine Tracey (Contract)
Susan Kowalski (Maternity LOA)

Executive Assistant
Carol Lukasik

Administrative Support
Anita Klemmensen
Susan Dolgos (Contract)
Annette Cada (Ontario Works Contract)

Community Partners

CONTACT Niagara Resource Coordinators are your connection to these service partners:

Children's Services

Niagara Centre for Youth Care
Niagara Child Development Centre
Child Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)

Developmental Services

Adult Protective Service Worker Program
(division of FACS, Family Counselling Centre)
Bethesda
Children's Developmental Assessment Services (CDAS), Autism Initiative,
Autism Consultation Services (Child & Adolescent Developmental Services -
Hotel Dieu Health Sciences Hospital)
Christian Horizons
Community Living Fort Erie
Grimsby/Lincoln & District Association for Community Living
Mainstream
Niagara Support Services
Niagara Training & Employment Agency
Port Colborne District Association for Community Living
St. Catharines Association for Community Living
Welland District Association for Community Living

Profiles

Susan Dolgos: Administrative Support

My story begins in 1999 when I realized that I needed a career change. I enrolled in a computer course and found it very interesting. After two courses and receiving my grade 12 Diploma I began my search for a rewarding career opportunity. But I had difficulties. My children were young and I did not have a network of friends and relatives to assist with childcare. I was so happy when I met Marisa McShanon from the Ontario Works Program. She reassured me with her kind words that I would be able to travel to placements and still be home for my children after school. She really put me at ease.

Following a placement at the Ministry of Transportation and the Salvation Army, I was given an opportunity at Contact Niagara. I would like to point out that having participated in the Ontario Works Program made the transition from no experience to being capable of succeeding in a working environment possible.

Contact Niagara is a dream come true. I perform a multitude of tasks such as data entry, answering phones and preparing files for reference. All of this gives me satisfaction physically and mentally. My co-workers are very kind, pleasant and thoughtful. I truly enjoy going to work. Recently Contact Niagara offered me a temporary position as an employee to continue my work experience. I happily accepted and look forward to being a team member. I would like to thank everyone who made this journey possible.

Art Wing: Past Chairperson of the Board

In September of 1998 Bob O'Neill approached me about the possibility of becoming involved with a new community effort related to children's and developmental services. He gave me a copy of the document "Niagara's Best Advice" which was the result of the work of the Niagara panel that Bob had chaired. After reading the paper I realized that what had been recommended represented a job that really needed to get done - a job that would be in the interest of parents, children and individuals with a developmental disability. Now, some three years later, Contact Niagara is in place and I believe is working well. This is confirmed when I review some of the comments that consumers have made about their experiences with our organization.

I believe that one of the important advantages of Contact is its ability to capture information about service activity across the system. This information will support the development of an annual community service plan and will position Contact Niagara as the best advocate for children's and developmental services that Niagara has had.

In my view we need to continue to work hard with our service partners at furthering the development of a community system of services across the Niagara Region. In fact, when I look forward three to five years I see a system with tremendous capability to increasingly meet the needs of individuals and families. I also see Contact Niagara as an integral part of that system. Indeed, I am proud to have been one of many individuals who have contributed to the progress of this important initiative.

What Consumers are Saying

Contact Niagara routinely asks individuals to fill out a client satisfaction survey related to their involvement with us once they have completed the intake process. The following are several comments individuals have made:

"It was fast. Questions were asked in a non-judgmental way. They made me feel like my knowledge and opinions of *** were important."

"Thank you for providing us with support. We have had no support from family and friends. I really appreciate your support and services."

"I am so very thankful that there are organizations that can help me advocate for my son - and will advocate for him. It is difficult to know what is available in the way of services and support. Your organization was a wonderful help to get us going on our 'journey into the future', now that my son has finished formal schooling and the unknown lies ahead."

"I am totally impressed. The Resource Coordinator knew the resources and was polite - called me back at my convenience."

"I appreciate all your help and understanding. I am pleased with the way in which my problems/concerns were handled in a very professional and timely manner."

"The time was taken to LISTEN to what I felt the problem was."

"Prompt service was very important and we are very pleased with the immediate service we have received."

"The [Resource Coordinator] spent time immediately with me to discuss my problem and the options available. I really appreciated talking and not having an abrupt conversation that was just meant to move me along."

"Believe it or not, it felt good to talk to a person who was not judgmental towards my child, who seemed to understand, and be concerned and willing to help"

"I found the service was great, it was not long for ourselves to finally get some real help. I appreciate the kindness, understanding and the action. Also, the follow-up calls were helpful."

"The Resource Coordinator took detailed information over the phone. They did not require me to make a special trip to St. Catharines to get the process in motion - this was much appreciated as I would have to take time off work."