

Chair's Message

At the annual meeting of Contact Niagara last year I reported that Contact Niagara had evolved into a mature organization helping to ensure access to quality services and supports. The evolutionary process continues as illustrated by the changing nature of the calls the agency receives. In 2001-2002, 944 calls were for information and 1,102 were intake calls while in 2002-2003, there were 731 calls for information and 1,600 calls were intake calls. The role of the agency continues to change as the community becomes more aware of the services Contact Niagara provides.

The development and implementation of a computerized Information System for all four Contact Agencies was one of the highlights of this year. Our Executive Director, Steve Novosedlik, played a leading role in this project and deserves special thanks for his contribution and leadership. The system, the result of careful planning and collaborative work, will provide invaluable information not only to Contact Niagara but also to our service provider partners and to the Ministry. Another important initiative is the development of an annual Community Service Plan, which will provide information to help make resource decisions for both children's and developmental services. This project has also required a great deal of time and energy from Contact Niagara.

As more and more people seek out the assistance of Contact Niagara and as the agency becomes more and more involved in community activities and initiatives, the staff will continue to be challenged to provide high quality, responsive service. The 2002-2003 experience suggests that our staff are more than able to meet this challenge.

To the staff, to our Executive Director, to our service provider partners, to the Board and to the Ministry officials who work with us I extend a sincere thanks for all your excellent cooperation and fine work.

Bill Matheson, Contact Niagara Board Chair

Executive Director's Report

Contact Niagara has completed its third full fiscal year of operations. During the first two, much of the emphasis was placed on designing and implementing the core elements of our mandate as guided by 'System by Design'. This past year however, can best be characterized as a 'settling in' period. It was during this year that we gained a better sense of our role as well as to begin to focus and evaluate the various processes and tools we had developed to support our mandate. This was particularly important given the continued increase in the number of individuals who called requesting services and supports. Our ability to manage this growing demand required us to constantly examine the manner in which we carried out our work.

One of the more significant areas of focus this year has been the completion of our information system. We officially launched the system in the middle of March in preparation for its first full year of operation in 2003/04. This new system has many capabilities beyond its core function of housing important consumer information that forms the basis of the intake document forwarded to service providers. We see it as a tool that will begin to inform us about the service system from a number of perspectives. Identifying the types of services people are requesting and the capability of the system to respond to these requests are but two simple examples of the kind of information that we will be able to gather consistently and accurately. More importantly, this information along with other community data will serve as a beginning point to support the community planning process.

The community planning process itself has also been the focus of much work this past year. I had noted in last year's report that we had begun a community consultation process to help design the framework and process for the community plan. That work was completed by early summer and was then forwarded to the Ministry for consideration and approval. By late fall we had begun the implementation process by mapping out a strategy for its completion during the 2003/04 fiscal year. We are now poised to produce the inaugural plan by the end of this upcoming fiscal year. We expect that this first plan will be an important 'learning experience' for ourselves as well as for our community. We are very anxious to move forward with this initiative.

I believe it is important to acknowledge that the work and accomplishments of Contact Niagara over this past year are directly linked to the strength of our relationships with all of our partners across the system. Our colleagues in both the children's and developmental service sectors have demonstrated a measure of collaboration that has contributed to our ability to successfully connect individuals to needed services and supports.

I also wish to point out the importance of leadership – the type of leadership that has been provided by the Board of Directors of this organization. Their efforts and attention to Contact Niagara have proved to be an invaluable support to our collective work.

Finally, every staff member deserves individual recognition for their dedication and commitment to the work of Contact Niagara. This organization has been extremely fortunate to have a staff of this calibre at the heart of its operations – a group that ensures the needs expressed by consumers result in helpful connections to our community's services and supports.

Stephen Novosedlik, Executive Director

A Year in Review : June 2003

Over the 2002/03 fiscal year, emphasis was placed on improving our ability to respond to consumer requests for service. Focus was therefore placed on addressing key issues related to the 'access' process at Contact Niagara. In so doing, we have realized several simple, but important benefits for consumers:

1. Individuals seeking service no longer have to make multiple calls to individual agencies in order to find the supports they are seeking. Contact Niagara works with the individual to identify their needs and follows through with an intake to the most appropriate agency(ies) and supports.
2. The intake process, in its fullest form, is completed once. If a consumer requires additional referrals subsequent to their first encounter with Contact Niagara, all that is required is an update to the individual's situation.
3. Because all intakes are now centralized, Contact Niagara has the capacity to collect important utilization information related to services and supports funded by the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services. The ability to identify the total number of individuals requiring service, tracking waitlists for service, identifying gaps in service and pressures on the system are just a few examples of the nature of the information that can be derived.

Common Tool for Intake

Our standardized intake form continues to be the subject of minor changes as we learn more about the information requirements of each of the service providers across the Region. With the implementation of our new information system, we took the opportunity to upgrade the format of the 'common tool' to ensure that that essential information was presented clearly and concisely.

Coordinated Information

Providing service information to callers has become an important element of our work. Resource Coordinators managed over 1,200 requests for information and consultation over the course of the year. This represents about 40% of all calls received.

Summary of Service Plan

The 'Summary of Service Plan' provides up to date information about the services and supports an individual receives once a referral is forwarded to an agency. This information serves two important purposes:

1. It maintains a current record of the service status for individuals which is important for service providers when they receive intake information; and,
2. It provides a system level understanding of how services are used.

The latter purpose will take on more importance as Contact Niagara moves to implement the community planning process this year. This high level statistical information begins to provide some insight regarding services delivered and service pressures.

Case Resolution

Contact Niagara facilitated the case resolution process for approximately 13 individuals over the 2002/03 fiscal year. This process is intended for families or individuals with extraordinary needs and as a result were experiencing difficulties gaining access to services. In each situation, varying degrees of supports were acquired as a result of the hard work and contributions of the service providers 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. Contact Niagara has been working with a 'most in need' tool for approximately one year. It was developed in concert with the service provider system. Now that we have had an opportunity to work with it, we recognize that both the tool and process require improvement. We expect to engage our partners in this improvement process over the coming year.

Community Planning

The Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services have given the Contact Agencies the mandate of producing an annual Community Service Plan encompassing all of its funded agencies. The purpose of the plan is to identify overall utilization of services, service gaps, current and emerging trends in utilization as well as to identify community priorities. The planning process will engage the community at a number of levels in terms of its development.

Over the 2002/03 fiscal year, emphasis was placed on developing, by way of a community consultation process, the framework and process that will be used to undertake community planning. The resultant proposal was submitted to and approved by the Ministry. The first official plan is to be delivered to the Ministry by the end of the 2003/04 fiscal year.

Community Involvement

As part of our work, Contact Niagara staff participate in a number of community processes and committees aimed at improving the overall ability of the service system to respond to the many needs of individuals. Several examples include the Residential Managers Group (Developmental Services), the District School Board Liaison Committee, le Comité de liaison Education/Santé de la Région de Niagara, the Healthy Babies/Healthy Children Adhoc Committee and the Intensive Child and Family Advisory Committee. In addition, Contact Niagara was also involved with the MCFCS Capital Places to Live Initiative and Respite Initiative, both within the developmental services system.

Board of Directors

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
 Murray Odesse

Contact Niagara Staff

Executive Director
 Stephen Novosedlik

Team Leader
 Beth Foster

Resource Coordinator
 Tom Archer
 Don Campbell
 Marcia Cramp
 Karen Colavecchia
 Cathy Gales (Part Time)
 Susan Kowalski (Part Time)
 Pat Robinson
 Lynne Rousseau (Bilingual)
 Fred Steinhaus
 Catherine Tracey (Part Time)

Executive Assistant
 Carol Lukasik

Administrative Support
 Susan Dolgos
 Jackie Frans
 Anita Klemmensen

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
 Community Living Grimsby/Lincoln
 Community Living Welland/Pelham
 Mainstream
 Niagara Support Services - St.Catharines
 Niagara Support Services - Niagara Falls
 Niagara Training & Employment Agency
 Port Colborne District Association for Community Living

Please see the insert to this report for our Mission, Vision, Values statement.

Financial Report

Fiscal Year Ended March 31	2003	2002
Revenue	\$ 892,317	\$893,624
Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	652,043	622,685
Other	273,956	293,945
	\$ 925,999	\$ 916,630
Net Excess of Expenses over Revenue	\$ (33,682)	\$ (23,006)

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:

"I like how you care for people and how you treat people who are trying to help their self like me. Thank you."

"The response to our phone call for assistance was immediate, very informative, patient with questions."

"Contact Niagara gave me the information I needed and gave me the name of the person to talk to. The person I spoke with was able to provide me with all the info I needed at once."

"The individual attention, understanding and perception received from initial contact person. You helped me to be informed about the services that were available and those not available."

"I feel that my needs were a great concern and the response and understanding were great."

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

"I am starting to get some answers about my son's concerns, one stop phone call for a referral."

"The paperwork was submitted and I was very happy with the response + caring attitude shown by your staff."

"I would like to thank all those involved in helping me make an easy transition from Niagara Falls to St. Catharines. My son's needs are being met and my concerns are dealt with. Thanks again."

"I was pleased to find that on my first contact (by telephone) we were able to get started finding the help I need through telephone interviews."

"Since I have contacted you. I am finding things are getting better (slowly). It gave me peace of mind to realize these things are normal. I have been able to take a step back and start from the beginning with discipline. And others actually notice a difference in me and my son."

Table 1: Requests for Service by Type

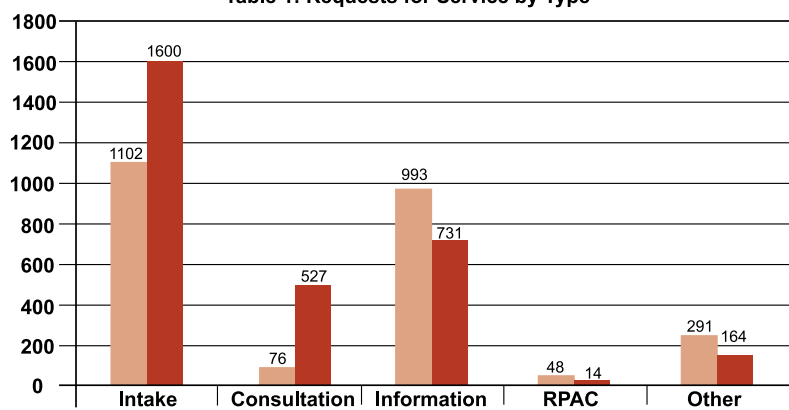


Table 1 provides an analysis of the total number of calls, by type, for the year ending March 2003 as compared to the 2001/02 fiscal year.

2001/02 = 2,510 Requests
 2002/03 = 3,306 Requests

Table 2: Intakes: 2001/02 vs 2002/03

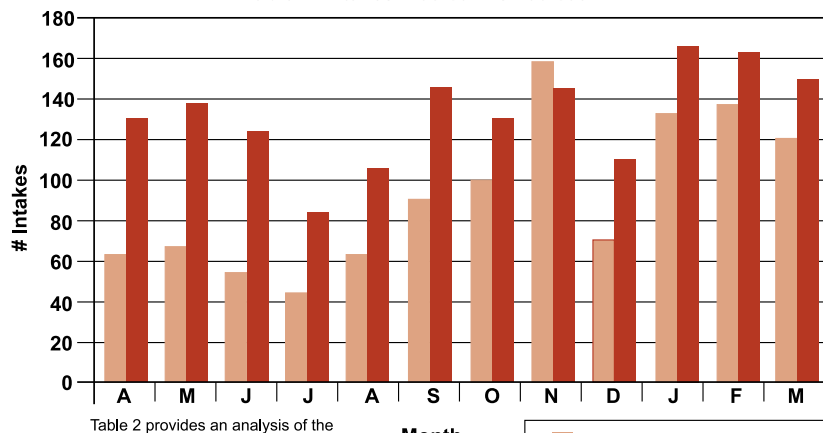


Table 2 provides an analysis of the number of intakes completed by month for the year ending March 2003 as compared to the 2001/02 fiscal year.

2001/02 = 1,102 Intakes
 2002/03 = 1,600 Intakes