

Chair's Message

As Contact Niagara enters its fifth year of operations it can look back on an impressive list of accomplishments. These include the implementation of a Single Point of Access Model, the development of a Common Tool for Intake, the development of a Case Resolution Model, the development of an Information System common to all Contact Agencies and most recently the completion of a Community Planning Process. In addition there has been a growing appreciation in the community of the role of Contact Niagara, especially with regard to the useful information which the agency compiles in its daily work.

However, looking back is not Contact Niagara's style – it's the future that really matters – a future that provides challenges and opportunities. The challenges are to overcome the residual resistance to the whole concept of Contact Niagara and to improve what Contact Niagara already does well. The opportunities are to expand the services Contact Niagara provides into new sectors of the service community, across ministries and indeed across governments.

Contact Niagara's success is the result of the hard work of many people. Our staff, led by the Executive Director have worked well together as a team and are chiefly responsible for the success the agency has enjoyed. Various officials of the Ministries have been constantly supportive of our work. The Board has been industrious and conscientious and has provided great support over the years. It has been a pleasure to work with all of these people.

Bill Matheson, Contact Niagara Board Chair

Report of the Executive Director

In taking a moment to look back over the 2003/04 fiscal year, an interesting theme emerged related to several of Contact Niagara's major areas of focus. While continuing to press forward with the overall access process, case resolution and Residential Placement Advisory Committee we also began to engage more intently on broader 'system' level work. It is this emphasis on the 'system' which represents another significant element of the spirit and intent of the overarching policy which led to Contact Niagara's establishment. Our community planning process, our involvement with the Developmental Services Residential Manager's Group in the design, implementation and ongoing administration of a sector-wide vacancy management process and the complete launch of our information system are but three very good examples of the attention now being paid to the 'system' within which we must all function collectively. Given this, I would like to take a moment to provide a few more details about these three projects.

The community planning process actually began in the winter 2002 and culminated with a community reference group process in late spring of 2004. In keeping with the Ministry's expectation, a community service plan was to be developed for each of the developmental and children's services sectors. As an essential first step, the focus of these two plans required clarity. That focus was achieved by identifying seven important questions:

1. What is the nature and magnitude of the demand for Ministry of Community and Social Services and Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCSS/MCYS) - funded services?
2. What resources are available to respond to that demand and how are they currently being used?
3. What are the identified strengths, weaknesses and pressures of the current service system?
4. What should be the priorities for enhancing the current service system over the next three years?
5. Where are the opportunities to address population well being and achieve positive change within the current system?
6. What are the characteristics of the local community that need to be taken into account when planning?
7. What areas require further exploration?

Addressing these questions involved an approach which was carried out in two major phases. The first focused on collecting information through a variety of means from a number of sources. This work was completed through the fall and winter of 2003/04. The second involved the establishment of a 'reference group' – one for each sector – whose purpose was to establish an overall vision for the system followed by planning priorities based on both the information gathered and their own unique areas of expertise. Members

of these two groups were drawn from various levels of the organizations most directly involved as well as consumers and allied service providers (for example - Health, Education). The successful conclusion of each of the reference groups' work came in late spring. What remains is the submission of both formal plans to the Ministry. This is expected to occur by mid-summer of 2004.

This inaugural planning process was an important learning experience for both Contact Niagara and the overall service system. As a next step, we intend to carefully evaluate the process with the view of improving upon it in subsequent efforts.

I believe it important to acknowledge the contribution made by all of the reference group members as well as the service provider system throughout this process. Their involvement in multiple working sessions in addition to supplying key data throughout the information collection phase is to be commended.

A second major project area has been that of addressing the issues associated with individuals who require a residential resource within the developmental services sector. As it stands, there are many more who need this support than spaces available. In recognition of this 'waitlist' issue the first step undertaken was to develop a central registry to maintain an up-to-date listing of all individuals across the Niagara Region who are waiting for service. Contact Niagara assumed responsibility for this initial process and subsequently registered all individuals identified throughout the system. This registry is now maintained on a routine basis.

While the registry was an important first step it was also recognized that a process was needed to identify who from the waitlist would be most appropriate to fill a vacancy once identified in the system. With this in mind, discussions began with the "Residential Managers Group" a longstanding representative body within the developmental services sector to determine how best to approach the management of residential vacancies. To that end, a prototype process was developed in early 2003, pilot tested and then formalized. In July of 2003, the Niagara Executive Director's Forum approved what is now known as the 'Vacancy Management Protocol'. At the heart of the protocol is an understanding that all types of residential vacancies within the MCSS funded system that become available are subject to a system-wide process designed to identify the most suitable candidate.

The overall process is now managed by the Residential Manager's Group. Contact Niagara maintains an important role in the administration of the process and the management of the information required through all of its stages.

A third major project area has been the full implementation of Contact Niagara's information system. While launched in March of 2003 we have now completed our first full year of operation. While its core function is that of housing consumer information embodied in the intake document itself, it has been designed to glean information that can create a better understanding of the service system as a whole. Indeed, as part of the information supporting the community planning process, a variety of utilization data was drawn from the database to assist the Reference Groups in understanding broad service patterns. This included for example, referrals, services requested and delivered and waitlist information. In the one year since launch we have gained valuable insights into the capability of this system to assist the service provider network as a group to continue to increase their understanding of resources consumers are requesting and the resources available within the context of demand, gaps and service pressures.

I have stated before and continue to affirm 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, including the Regional Office of the Ministry. Our colleagues in the two sectors of children's and developmental services continue to demonstrate a commitment to collaboration which has in turn contributed to our ability to connect individuals to needed services and supports.

I also would like to stress the importance of the commitment and leadership provided by the Board of Directors of this organization. Their efforts and attention to Contact Niagara as well as the broader system continue to be a significant support to our collective work.

Finally, every staff member deserves individual recognition for their dedication and commitment to the work of Contact Niagara. We are very fortunate to have a staff group of this quality at the heart of our 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

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

Board of Directors

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

Contact Niagara Staff

Executive Director
 Stephen Novosedlik

Manager of Client Services
 Beth Foster

Resource Coordinators

Tom Archer
 Don Campbell
 Karen Colavecchia
 Marcia Cramp
 Cathy Gales (Part Time)
 Scott Johnson
 Susan Kowalski (Part Time)
 Lynne Rousseau (Bilingual)
 Fred Steinhaus

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 Child and Youth Services

Child Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)

Developmental Services

Adult Protective Service Worker Program
 (division of FACS, Family Counselling Centre)

Bethesda

Christian Horizons

Community Living Fort Erie

Community Living Grimsby/Lincoln

Community Living Port Colborne/Wainfleet

Community Living Welland/Pelham

Community Living St. Catharines

Hotel Dieu Health Sciences - Child and Adolescent Services
 (programs are Children's Developmental Assessment Service,
 Autism Consultation Service, and Autism Initiative)

Mainstream

Niagara Support Services

Niagara Training & Employment Agency

Financial Report

| Fiscal Year Ended March 31 | 2004 | 2003 |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Revenue | \$ 967,983 | \$892,317 |
| Expenses | | |
| Salaries & Benefits | 753,856 | 709,501 |
| Other | 233,503 | 216,498 |
| | \$ 987,359 | \$ 925,999 |
| Net Excess of Expenses over Revenue | \$ (19,376) | \$ (33,682) |

During the 2003/04 fiscal year, Contact Niagara managed over 4200 requests for service – a 38% increase from the previous year. Of these approximately 57% were for intake while the balance were comprised largely of consultation and information calls.

Of the 2393 intakes that were completed, 1520 were within the children's sector, 726 were within the developmental sector and 147 were intakes that crossed both sectors. These intakes resulted in a total of 2589 referrals with 1606 directed to children's services, 780 to the developmental system and 203 to both sectors for those individuals who required supports from these two systems.

While the number of intakes and referrals are important indicators it is worth noting that these were completed on behalf of a total of 2057 unique individuals. Looked at in a different way, all of the 2057 unique individuals had an initial comprehensive intake completed. However, 264 individuals required subsequent referrals at a later point. In these instances, a simple update to the original intake was completed and forwarded to the most appropriate service provider.

Table 1: Requests for Service by Type

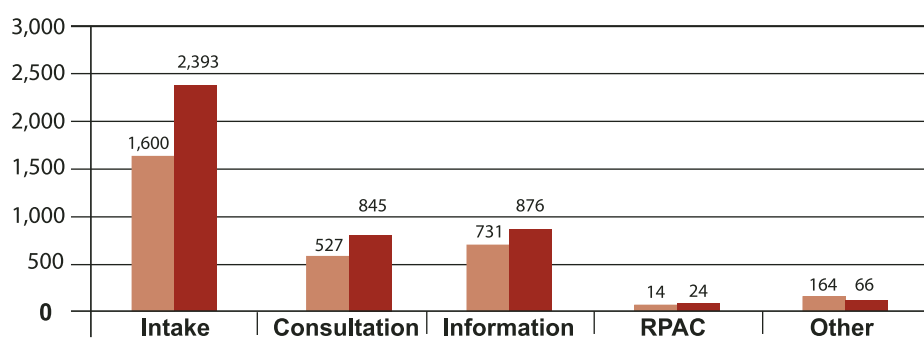


Table 1 provides an analysis of the total number of Requests for Service by Type for the year ending March 31, 2004 as compared to the 2002/03 fiscal year.

2002/03 = 3,036 Requests
 2003/04 = 4,204 Requests

Table 3: Total Number of Unique Individuals Served by Sector
 Year ending March 31, 2004

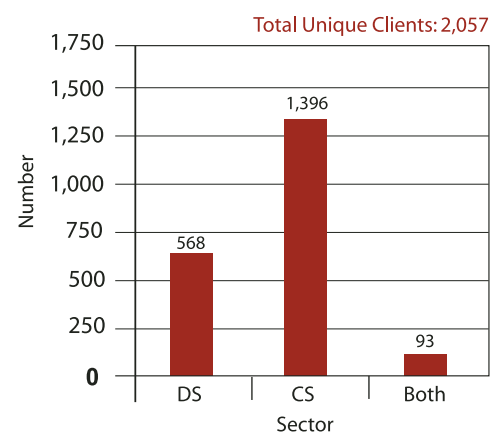


Table 3 provides an analysis of the total number of unique individuals served for each of the three sectors of developmental services, children's services and those individuals who cross both sectors.

Table 2: Completed Intakes 2002/03 vs 2003/04

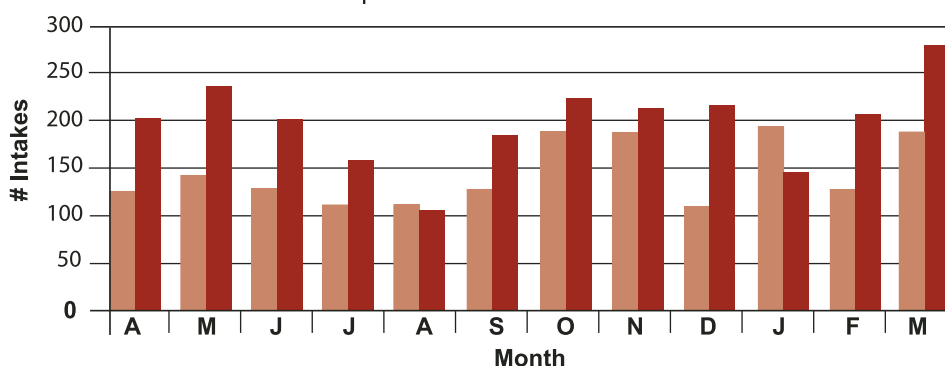


Table 2 provides an analysis of the total number of Completed Intakes by month for the year ending March 31, 2004 as compared to the 2002/03 fiscal year.

2002/03 = 1,711 Completed Intakes
 2003/04 = 2,393 Completed Intakes

Table 4: Total Number of Completed Referrals by Sector
 Year ending March 31, 2004

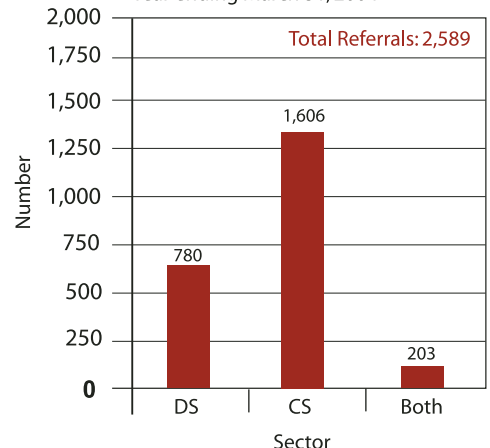


Table 4 provides an analysis of the total number of completed referrals for each of the three sectors of developmental services, children's services and those individuals who cross both sectors.