

Chair's Report

Our work at Contact Niagara continues unabated as we continue to face the ongoing challenges of Covid 19. Led by our Executive Director Nadine Wallace our dedicated staff has facilitated over 4000 intake contacts this year. These intakes have been handled in a timely professional manner. We continue to look for ways to streamline the intake process and at the same time maintain our high standards of attaining the right information that can be utilized by our partners.

I am always pleased to hear about the high regard our partner agencies have about our Contact Niagara Team. Our reputation is one of which we can be proud.

The coming year ahead will not be without its challenges as we adapt to an ever-changing work environment. I am confident our team will meet these challenges in a safe and effective manner.

We have spent the better part of the year redesigning our website. Our goal is to launch this new website by December 2021. We will need to revisit our Strategic Planning process to finalize and update the work that was sidelined when Covid 19 arrived on the scene. A well thought out strategic plan will keep us focused and allow us to measure our success.

On behalf of the board I would like to thank JoAnn Theobald for her participation on our board. JoAnn provided us with many thoughtful insights in our deliberations. I would like to welcome our newest board member Tanja Steinbach who has given us much to think about in regards to our work with our Indigenous Community. To quote Her Excellency The Right Honourable Governor

General of Canada, Mary Simon, "reconciliation is a way of life and requires work every day. Reconciliation is getting to know one another" As a board we have and will continue the work of getting to know one another.



Consumer Satisfaction Comments...

The Contact Niagara representative was very kind and was well-spoken. She listened and was genuinely concerned about our situation. She advised us on every detail and made sure we understood the process of things. Amazing work!

Finally, I would like to thank our Board of Directors. This year required many more meetings than we originally scheduled. Yet despite these extra meetings, no one complained. We worked diligently and respectfully to make the best possible decisions for those we serve.

It is my sincere hope that sometime this coming year we will return to in person board meetings.

Again my thanks to the staff and board of directors of Contact Niagara, you make a difference.

Sincerely,
Todd Bright, Board Chair

Executive Director's Report

Although it is now September, this report as always will focus on our work from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. I want to start by acknowledging how all our lives have changed over the past months. As we continue to navigate a worldwide pandemic, we have been presented with challenges that we could not have imagined in early March of 2020. To all those who contact us for information and services, your strength,

courage, and sheer power of will leaves us speechless.

Mission:

To make a positive difference for individuals, families and the communities we serve, by providing coordinated information and processes, participating in collaborative community planning, and facilitating access to services.

Vision:

A community where everyone feels respected, valued and supported and every child and youth is able to reach their full potential.

Values:

At Contact Niagara, to guide our decisions and actions, we have a belief in and a commitment to the following core values:
Client and Family Centred
Personal Development
Integrity, Accountability, Trust and Transparency
Respect

Through all the challenges, the separation and isolation, the safety concerns, and accessibility limitations, as always, there has been an underlying theme of determination. You inspire us to look at the possibilities. To use technology in different ways. To explore what we can do and move us beyond what was once seen as out of reach. You leave us in awe. We recognize and value the privilege we have of hearing your stories.

This past year also saw us taking further steps to acknowledge and accept our nation's history with Indigenous Peoples. Speaking on behalf of us as an agency, we recognize that we have much to learn regarding the individual and systemic effects of colonization and we have committed ourselves to continuing to understand how Indigenous Communities would like our engagement to look and feel. We are committed to making our services safer and to further our understanding to ensure we are exercising cultural humility in every interaction.

As an agency this year, we also continued to strive to "see" better. To seeing the diversity in culture, language, abilities and individual

experiences in our community. We recognize the importance of understanding that those who identify as Indigenous, Francophone, Black and Brown, Muslim, part of the sexual and gender diverse community, and others who are marginalized for a variety of reasons, experience unique barriers to accessing services. We must seek to see and understand Niagara's diversities, so that we can remove barriers and increase our connection. Again, as events around the world remind us, peoples' experiences are layered, trust is often broken, and small things are only small if seen that way by the person experiencing them. How we deliver service and how we support people seeking service are done through a prism of unique journeys (gender, culture, language, race, faith). The more we can educate ourselves and each other, the more we can challenge ourselves and each other, the more likely we can ensure our services are informed, safe(r), and accessible to all. For 2021-2022, we will continue to commit to implementing practices that are meaningfully co-developed with those who have lived experience and who represent the diversity of experiences. We will continue to educate ourselves about the communities we serve. In the words of Maya Angelou,

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel".

As I reflect on our work together in Niagara, I am constantly reminded of the importance of partnerships. The pandemic has tested our ability to stay connected, to stay in relationship, but through those challenges, we continue to find innovative ways to collaborate and work together, aiming to break the cycle of programming silos. As an agency, we are very lucky to be given opportunities to both provide direct service and partner on existing and new initiatives with our many partners across the Niagara Region.

To the staff at Contact Niagara I want to say you are family. Each year I search for a way to convey my appreciation for the skill, dedication, compassion and empathy you bring every day. You inspire me. We have been met with obstacles

but never roadblocks because of you. We have been able to continue providing service, uninterrupted, because of you. These past months have seen us rely on each other more than ever before, and you continue to rise to any challenge we face. It is your spirit, both individually and collectively, which is the cornerstone of fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to us. I am privileged to work with each of you.

In closing, a final note of thanks to those of you who generously volunteer your time and expertise, to family members, the Youth Advisory Committee (YWHN), our direct service partners, and to the many partners we work with in our community, thank you for your never-ending dedication and energy to supporting Niagara. To the members of our Board of Directors, thank you. I am constantly reminded of the power we have individually and collectively to make change. It is your commitment to all of us, even during very challenging times, that allows us to continue to strengthen and improve.

Sincerely,

Nadine Wallace, Executive Director

2020-2021: Statistics on Intakes:

# of Intakes Created		# Unique Children/ Youth	Case notes Completed
2020/21	4,691	4,208	24,222
2019/20	4,721	4,107	27,363
2018/19	4,949	3,944	28,729
2017/18	5,011	3,293	27,699
2016/17	4,054	3,450	19,021

Stats: Who Called to make a referral:

2020/21	Caller / Requestor	
Self/ Family/Friend	1,810	38%
Physicians	2,397	50%
Other professionals	270	6%
School	82	2%
Police	36	1%
FACS (CAS)	97	2%
Other/Anonymous	67	1%
Total	4,759	100%

As our systems of service as a whole look to how we can improve services and enhance programming, we understand engaging those with lived expertise is critical as we embrace opportunities and sometimes challenges of a constantly evolving system of services. We understand that change is often our constant and like our partners, we are always looking for opportunities to improve services and processes.

✚ 2020-2021 saw us continue to move forward in Niagara with developing a shared vision for health care transformation through the Niagara Ontario Health Team-Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ESON). This work is ongoing and Contact Niagara is excited to be part of it.

✚ As led by Pathstone Mental Health, Niagara's child and youth mental health system lead agency, we continue to look at opportunities to collaborate on enhancing the child and youth mental health system of services, ensuring strong linkages across sectors (e.g. autism,

Very understanding, compassionate and thorough I felt heard.

developmental), and embedding family engagement in everything we do.

✚ We are continuing our participation in various research projects focused on co-development of services.

✚ Niagara continues to refine our Transitional Age Youth pathways for those youth transitioning into adulthood who may be eligible for adult developmental services.

✚ We are continuing to partner with the Niagara Regional police other community-based resources on Niagara's Extrajudicial Measures Program, for youth who intersect with the justice system.

✚ We continue to finalize our next strategic plan, ensuring opportunities for meaningful family engagement.

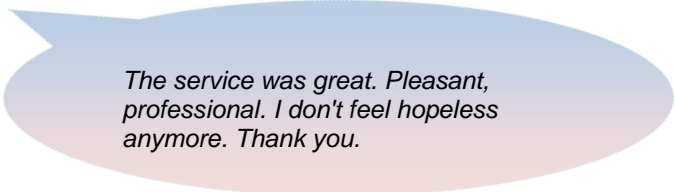
Specific Program Highlights:

Co-ordinated Service Planning (CSP)

Coordinated Service Planning (CSP) was a new initiative for Niagara in the 2020-2021 fiscal year. CSP promotes the vision of a system in which children and youth with complex special needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, school, and in the community. The objective of CSP, is to provide a seamless and family-centred service experience and develop a single coordinated service plan that articulates the needs and goals of the child or youth and family. The plan is developed in partnership with the caregiver and monitored by a dedicated Service Planning Coordinator who acts as a single point of contact, facilitates the planning process, and liaises with all service providers involved with the family (“the Family Team”). CSP helps service providers take a unified, wrap-around approach to supporting families and clients with complex needs that cross sectors, with the goal of promoting clear, consistent, and transparent communication, and finding innovative approaches to family-centred service provision. In collaboration with schoolboards and a network of partner organizations across Niagara’s children’s service sectors, some of whom also provide CSP, Contact Niagara acts the Coordinating Agency for the Niagara Region.

Throughout the 2020-2021 fiscal year, Contact Niagara led implementation and planning activities, with the goal of a soft launch of active service of April 1st of 2021. Together we successfully established the governance framework and terms of reference for committees, as well as developed the Niagara CSP Memorandum of Understanding to acknowledge the commitment among all of the partners that make Co-ordinated Service Planning a reality. The implementation workplan was finalized and approved, and key objectives were achieved in preparation for Niagara’s soft launch, including the development of policies and practices to articulate referral, eligibility determination, and strengths and needs assessment processes, and outlining a

communication and engagement strategy to support the development of safe and culturally competent CSP services for Indigenous and Francophone children, youth and families. Most exciting, were the engagement opportunities with Niagara’s existing Family Advisories, which led to the recruitment of CSP Family Advisors as permanent members on our Steering and Operations committees. Contact Niagara began providing active CSP services on April 1st, 2021.



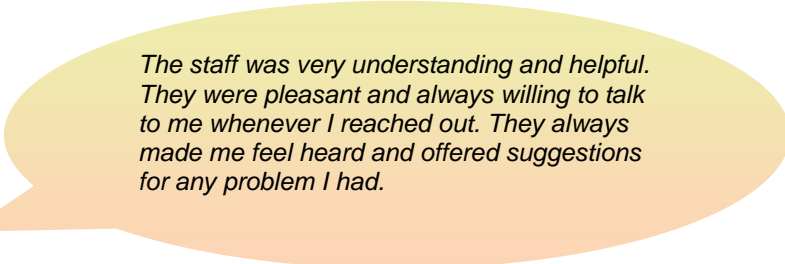
The service was great. Pleasant, professional. I don't feel hopeless anymore. Thank you.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

FASD is a complex, often invisible and misunderstood disorder. Contact Niagara, on behalf of Niagara, implemented the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Coordinator role in 2020-21 to support families of children and youth with/or suspected of having FASD; work that is closely aligned with Coordinated Service Planning Program. As we have articulated above, initiating a new program during a pandemic presents different types of challenges, and despite working virtually, Niagara as a whole and the staff at Contact Niagara have been supportive throughout the implementation of this new Program, an FASD Co-ordinator role, to support existing FASD services and supports, including Niagara’s FASD Coalition.

The focus of the FASD program at Contact Niagara is to provide referrals, assist families to navigate services, answer questions about FASD, respond to programming needs, and provide training opportunities about FASD to families and professionals, in both English and French. Staff are committed to supporting initiatives being offered federally, provincially, and locally. During this past year, a community scan was completed with those with lived experience and providers requesting input for program development, which has been used to provide guidance on our strengths and needs in Niagara.

Goals of this program include supporting awareness, training activities, and increasing service capacity. This past year, Niagara participated in a province wide webinar entitled “Building on Strengths: FASD Family Capacity Building Workshop”, with Contact Niagara providing French facilitation support, and Niagara continued to build understanding and clinical skills through participation in a number of professional development opportunities; we recognized FASD Awareness month in September with a number of activities occurring throughout the month; and we continued to work to support children, youth and families access services.



The staff was very understanding and helpful. They were pleasant and always willing to talk to me whenever I reached out. They always made me feel heard and offered suggestions for any problem I had.

Locally, Contact Niagara is an active participant on the Niagara FASD Coalition. One of the Coalition’s goals in Niagara is to identify resources for FASD diagnosis. Contact Niagara has been working with Surrey Place to pilot an intake process for FASD clinical assessments, and also with members of the Indigenous Health Network, and the Ron Joyce Centre at McMaster Children’s Hospital to ensure culturally safe(r) and informed services and pathways specifically for Indigenous children, youth and their families.

Niagara as a whole is working diligently to ensure children and youth who may benefit from more specialized FASD support are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity. In addition to providing intake completion through an FASD lens, various initiatives in the form of workshops (e.g. FASD and Sexuality; Music Therapy Series etc.) and themed kit deliveries (120) to families with children/youth identified with suspected/confirmed FASD, have been offered collaboratively with the Family Counselling Centre and Health Nexus.

Youth Wellness Hub Niagara (YWHN)

The right services at the right time in the right place. That is the goal of the YWH model. In February 2017, the Ontario government announced funding for integrated service hubs across the province to address gaps in the youth service system. After a call for proposals, Niagara became one of the six (6) expanded sites, making 10 across the province. This model is intended to serve as fully integrated “one-stop-shops” for youth aged 12-25, to address their needs related to mental health, substance use, primary care, education, employment, training, housing and other community and social services. In the spring of 2021, annualized base funding was announced for the 10 YWHO sites across the province, with plans for continued expansion of the number of sites. This funding supports the delivery of five core hub services, including mental health and substance use supports, care coordination, primary care, peer support, and intake coordination. Niagara’s model is a formal collaborative with the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton-Niagara and the John Howard Society of Niagara, with Contact Niagara acting as the Network Lead. However, many other Niagara services and organizations support YWHN, including CASON, Pathstone Mental Health and others to support youth accessing services that are timely and low barrier.

Although certainly a challenging past year, this year also saw a number of exciting developments for Niagara’s Hub. As Ontario continued to respond to the pandemic, YWHN continued offering services and activities virtually. YWHN’s Youth Navigators began to offer virtual recreational activities, including yoga and cooking classes, via Zoom and Instagram Live. With the announcement of annualized funding, a major focus of the last year has been on the hiring and onboarding of Hub team members, prioritizing youth engagement and equity in the development of a dedicated Hub team. In addition to growing our Hub team over the last year, renovations and setup of the Hub’s primary drop-in space in Welland has also been completed, and the Hub

team is now offering both in-person and virtual services.

As we look forward to the upcoming year, we are excited to welcome more youth to the drop-in space and to continue building on partnerships focused on supporting priority populations, such as Francophone, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+, and newcomer youth. With the expansion of the Niagara Region Hub team and service offerings, refocusing on connecting with community partners, and working to build long-lasting, meaningful relationships, that support youth from diverse communities in the Region will be a priority.

We want to recognize and extend our deep appreciation to the YWHN Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). These members have volunteered countless hours to working to ensure these spaces and services are youth friendly, safe(r), and inclusive.

YWHN YAC members:

- Rachel Anderson
- Bedia Buhaga
- Olivia Cyr (Francophone)
- Julia Do
- Stephanie Groff
- Travis Lalonde
- Crystal Lau
- Alex Laugher
- Giselle Rugigana (Francophone)
- Jack Taylor
- Devon Walpole

Financial Report:		
Fiscal Year End	2020	2021
March 31		
Revenue		
MCCSS / MOH	1,476,080	1,547,393
Flow Through Revenues	281,779	-
System Planning	104,856	-
Rental and Other	29,190	28,152
TOTAL:	1,891,905	\$1,584,545
Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	1,257,983	1,109,572
Other Expenses (including purchased client services)	352,503	474,973
TOTAL:	1,610,486	\$1,584,545
Ministry Subsidy Payable		
Children's Services	0	52,355
TOTAL:	0	\$52,355
Youth Wellness Hub		
Revenue	281,779	659,708
Expenses	281,779	659,708
TOTAL:	\$0	\$0
Other Revenues (Expenses)	\$(360)	\$10,000
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenses	\$(360)	\$10,000

Very knowledgeable and good listener. Relatable and easy to talk to. Didn't make me, as a parent, feel judged or guilty of how we have managed so far. Encouraging. Everything was done amazingly well. I appreciate all of you.

**Board of Directors
(2020- 2021)**

Chair: Todd Bright
Vice-Chair: Marcel Jacques
Treasurer: Jordan Clark
Secretary: Kristy Andersen
Board Members:
Nick Baxter
Justin Creamer
George Kurzawa
Tanja Steinbach
JoAnn Theobald

**Contact Niagara Staff
(2020 - 2021)**

Organizational Supports:
Anita Engelage (Reception/Administration)
Jackie Frans (IT/Database Administrator)
Liliane Guertin (Bilingual Support
Translator/Interpreter)
Elaine Hand (Administration/Database Support)
Zibya MacLeod (Bookkeeper)
Nadine Wallace (Executive Director)

Resource Coordinators:
Julie Anderson
Jolene Bateman
Eva Berswick
Joanne Bovine (Bilingual RC)
Jenna Fiello
Heather Fowler
Margaret Griffiths
Kristen Hendry
Angela Lynch
Julie Nichols
Fred Steinhaus

YWHN:

Thomas Coyne (Program Manager/Clinical
Coordinator)
Ali Ahmed (Youth Navigator)
Deane McGean (Youth Navigator)
Shanen Smith (Youth Navigator)
Keeley Dutcher (Mental Health and Addictions
Counsellor)
Karlie Klink (Mental Health and Addictions
Counsellor)

CSP:

Ashley Hardman (System Lead)
Katie McKay
Liana Danyliuk

FASD:

Cathy Gales (FASD Lead)



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www.contactniagara.org



Annual Report: 2020 - 21

Thursday September 23, 2021
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