



Annual Report: –2022-23

***Wednesday September 27, 2023
aussi disponible en français***

Chair's Report

This Annual Report is an opportunity to celebrate our successes. I am so proud of the work Contact Niagara does on a daily basis. We have a proud tradition of meeting the needs of those we serve and we continue to be committed to working with all of our partners in an on-going transparent manner. Our system is better and stronger when we work together.

I firmly believe we live our Vision each and every day, “A community where everyone feels respected, valued and supported, and every child and youth is able to reach their full potential”.

We have an amazing talented staff that is led by our dedicated Executive Director, Nadine Wallace. Our professional staff tirelessly provides a high level of service in an efficient, and most importantly, caring manner. Contact Niagara does not have a Public Relations Department, we let the work we do each and every day speak for itself.

Our Board welcomed 3 new members this year: Heather Corey, Conrad Scala and Madison Scodellaro. Our Board of Directors brings a wealth of experience to the table and they are firmly committed to the mission of Contact Niagara:

“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.”

As I look forward to the future, I see an organization that is both innovative and creative, and at the same time provides a high level of service, meeting any challenges that may lie ahead.

Sincerely,
Todd Bright, Board Chair

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

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Executive Director's Report

Each year, I am privileged to be able to share a few words on behalf of our Agency. I use the word “our” with intent. Contact Niagara, and the roles we “get” to play, does not belong to us solely as an agency, to us as a staff team, to the Ministries or other funders (Thank you!!), to our service partners, or even to individuals in the community. We believe Contact Niagara belongs to and exists for all of these reasons, and to serve and work with all of the previously mentioned. Supporting a community is not a ‘single anything’ endeavor, and we are eternally grateful for all of the opportunities we are gifted to work together, to learn together, and to partner in a multitude of ways!

Having acknowledged our shared ownership, we do not overlook the strength, determination, and courage, of the people who reach out and who motivate us every day. We recognize and value the privilege we have of hearing your stories, and the courage it takes to share them. You continue to inspire us and leave us in awe.

As we gather for our AGM, much has transpired during the 2022-2023 fiscal year, and we also want to acknowledge, much has transpired since the beginning of the new fiscal year (most of which will be highlighted in our 2024 AGM). Our role in some child and youth mental health services is changing significantly, and although we are sad those roles are ending, we look forward to new opportunities to continue to support Niagara.

2022-2023 also allowed us to ease Pandemic restrictions. We still masked and sanitized, and did our best to keep each other safe; and we used humour and music, and art and dance to keep each other going and energized. We saw (and continue to see) the

toll the past few years have taken on us collectively, and we continue to put our heads down, and to challenge each other to always be better; to remember kindness is never the wrong approach and will always allow us to move forward.

As I reflect on our work together in Niagara, I am constantly reminded of the importance of our relationships together. It is these relationships that build collaboration, that build opportunities, both born of crisis and for other reasons, that create spaces of safety leading to great and transformative ideas.

I want to say thank you to the members of our Board of Directors. I am constantly reminded of the power we have individually and collectively to make change. Thank you for your commitment to all of us, which ensures we continue to strengthen and improve.

To those of you who generously volunteer your time and expertise, to our family members, the Youth Wellness Hub-Niagara Youth Advisory Committee, 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 members of the Niagara community.

In closing, this year in particular, I really have no words for the gratitude I feel for the people I am privileged to work beside. I do not know the words to do them justice. These past months have brought many challenges, some expected, and some not. Some easily navigated and some far more complex. Throughout these times, the individuals that make up our staff family have never wavered. They act with integrity and grace each and every day. They are compassionate,

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dedicated, and determined, and courageously embrace each new change. I hope I say it often enough, I continue to marvel at your abilities to navigate any challenge, the caring and empathy that you bring with you every day, your kindness, your creativity, your humour, your strength ... your humanity... and your undying support for each other and the “work”. Because of you, once again, there have been no roadblocks to finding ways forward. These past years, and particularly past months, have seen us rely on each other more than ever before. Our collective ability to continue providing uninterrupted service, to fulfilling our responsibilities, is due to your commitment to our roles in the service system, and as importantly, to each other. I continue to be immensely proud and undyingly grateful to work with, laugh with, and learn from, each of you.

For 2023-2024, we continue to commit to implementing practices that are meaningfully co-developed with those who have lived experience and with our organizational partners, who represent a diversity of experiences. We re-commit to continuing our learning and to continuing to listen to understand, *and we confirm every #ChallengeAccepted!*

Sincerely,

Nadine Wallace, Executive Director

2022-2023 Highlights:

At Contact Niagara, we have made a commitment to de-colonizing our work and we recognize the on-going nature of this commitment. Our commitment recognizes our need to continue to challenge ourselves, our assumptions, and to continue our learning and understanding of the continued traumatic effects of not just our past, but our present

anti-Indigenous racism. Our Staff and Board recognize that this knowledge and understanding must shape our programming and services. We recognize that this is a long journey that requires dedication and time. We continue to work to embed approaches that are based in cultural humility and continue to be committed to strengthening our relationship with Niagara’s Indigenous community members.

2022-2023 saw us continue our commitment to Francophone community members of Niagara. To providing services which recognize our commitment to their unique cultural and linguistic needs and our need to honour their historical and legislative right to the availability and provision of all services in French.

As an Organization, we continue to consider ourselves fortunate to provide both direct service and partner on existing and new initiatives with our many partners across the Niagara region and beyond. As our systems of service as a whole look to how we can improve, we remain steadfast in our belief that these are community conversations, opportunities to build and co-develop, engaging with people with lived experience, members of different communities, direct and indirect service partners, and others impacted by how services are delivered and experienced. As part of these opportunities, we are always looking for opportunities to improve services and processes.

🚩 Since April of 2022 we have been privileged to formally partner with De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre (DAHAC), to ensure Indigenous identified children/youth/families are actively offered and connected with an Indigenous service provider when requested/preferred.

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✚ This year saw us continue our commitment to improving our provision of care and services and working to ensure they are grounded in health equity, care that recognizes each individual’s unique identity, care that affirms what makes us unique. In “seeing” each person’s uniqueness and experiences, we can continue to work to ensure that we reduce barriers to service for members of the community who identify as Indigenous, Francophone, Black and Brown, part of the sexual and gender diverse community, those who identify as having a disability, and others who are part of vulnerable or marginalized communities for any reason, and work to ensure individuals experience service that is safe and based in cultural humility. We understand that how we support people must be done through this understanding of unique journeys (gender, culture, language, race, faith), and that one “size” truly does not “fit” all.

✚ 2022-23 saw us continue to partner as health and social service providers in Niagara to develop and implement changes and new approaches to deliver identity-affirming care that is connected and accessible. The Niagara Ontario Health Team-Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara’s (NOHT-ÉSON) (<https://noht-eson.ca/>). work is ongoing and Contact Niagara continues to be excited and committed to be part of it.

✚ We continued to provide connected and integrated care through our coordinated Access and Service Co-ordination roles, providing a single front door to many different funded children’s services in Niagara; and to ensure children, youth and families were supported in their journey through services.

✚ We continued to collaborate on enhancing the child and youth mental health system of services, working to enhance linkages across sectors (e.g., autism, developmental).

✚ We are continuing our participation on various local (e.g., Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy, Community Wellness and Wellbeing Planning), West Region, and Provincial committees, and in various research projects focused on co-development of services.

✚ Niagara organizations and people with lived experience continue to partner on Transitional Age Youth pathways and services for those youth transitioning into adulthood who may be eligible for adult developmental services.

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

✚ We continued to launch new programming in partnership with other organizations, including Brock University’s SNAP program and Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario.

2022-2023: Statistics on Intakes and Service Co-ordination:

	# of Intakes Created Unique	# of Children/ Youth	*Case notes Completed	# of Unique Children/ Youth
	Children/ Youth			
2022/23	4,802	4,639	27,352	6,158
2021/22	5,460	4,173	29,628	5,716
2020/21	4,691	4,208	24,222	4,401
2019/20	4,721	4,107	27,363	4,961
2018/19	4,949	3,944	28,729	4,287
2017/18	5,011	3,293	27,699	-
2016/17	4,054	3,450	19,021	-

****Service Coordination supports on behalf of Unique Children and Youth***

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Stats: Who Called to make a referral:

2022/23	Caller / Requestor	
Self/ Family/Friend	1786	37 %
Physicians	1861	39 %
Other professionals	3863	8%
School	359	7%
Police	22	~0.5%
FACS (CAS)	69	~1.5%
Other/Anonymous	319	7%
Total	4802	100%

Other Programming Highlights:

Coordinated Service Planning (CSP)

Niagara’s Coordinated Service Planning (CSP) program is a collaborative, cross-sectoral initiative supported by many regional partners from across the health, education, developmental, autism, and child/youth mental health sectors. Contact Niagara is the Lead Agency for Niagara CSP, which promotes the vision of a system in which children and youth with complex and/or multiple needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, school, and in the community. CSP offers families of children/youth with multiple/complex special needs a seamless, family-centered service experience, with a single coordinated service plan that outlines the needs and goals of the child or youth and family, and how all their service providers will work together to achieve these goals and address these needs. Service Planning Coordinators offer families a single point of contact to streamline information and eliminate families having to retell their story.

Service Planning Coordinators at Contact Niagara facilitate this planning process and liaise with service providers involved with the family (“the Family Team”).

Many partner children’s service agencies also have Service Planning Coordinators, and as the Lead, Contact Niagara can provide a supportive role if helpful. Through collaboration, we are able to navigate system barriers, facilitate creative planning opportunities and coordinate multiple services across sectors. CSP is a framework which encourages service providers to take a holistic approach to supporting families and clients with very complex needs and work together to develop innovative approaches to service delivery.

Contact Niagara draws on our learnings and the strengths of the CSP program when asked to support other community committees and functions to offer the child/youth lens and promote the importance of coordinated care across the health system, such as our membership on the Integrated Care Working Group of the Niagara Ontario Health Team (NOHT).

We have seen an increase in Francophone families accessing CSP in 2022-2023, and continue to maintain full capacity as an agency to provide French language CSP services. Niagara’s Francophone school boards maintain membership on our CSP Steering Committee. Since April of 2022 we have also been privileged to partner with De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre (DAHAC), to support Indigenous-identified children/youth/families who wish to access CSP with an Indigenous service provider. We hope that, together, and with guidance of our colleagues at DAHAC, we can further build our system’s capacity to support choice and access to services based in cultural humility and inclusive services for members of Niagara’s Indigenous Community.

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Niagara CSP has now completed two full years of service and is actively supporting over 100 children/youth and their families across the region. Referrals for CSP are regularly received from partner service agencies, McMaster Children's Hospital, FACS Niagara, school boards, and parents/caregivers themselves. A recent increase in the number of self-referrals by caregivers based on word-of-mouth experiences supports the positive impact and perception of Niagara CSP among families in Niagara. While we continue to manage the increased volume of referrals to ensure families can access Coordinated Service

Planning as soon as possible, it has proved to be filling an obvious gap in services in the funded system and is anticipated to continue to receive an even higher volume of referrals in future years.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

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. In addition, Contact Niagara has been very fortunate to work with the Indigenous Health Network and De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, to support development of an Indigenous-specific service pathway.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a complex, often invisible and misunderstood disorder. Contact Niagara, in collaboration with other individuals and organizations on behalf of Niagara, implemented the FASD Coordinator role in 2020-21 to support children, youth with/or suspected of having FASD, and their families.

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This work is closely aligned with Coordinated Service Planning services. Niagara has been working together to build on existing FASD services and supports, including Niagara's FASD Coalition.

Goals of this program include supporting awareness, training activities, and increasing service capacity, including:

Caregiver/Family/Individual

- ✚ Direct information sharing with caregivers and others in the Niagara, support, consultation, region to region referrals.
- ✚ Distribution of activity kits creating opportunities for connection, (e.g., cooking classes The Youth Wellness Hub).

Capacity Building

- ✚ Providing activities both in-person and virtually for children, youth and families, to connect, to support each other and share stories and learnings.
- ✚ Sponsoring learning and other professional development opportunities; participating in a number of workshops/ webinars/ presentations for those living and working in Niagara;
- ✚ Partnering on a calendar of events to raise awareness for FASD Awareness in the month of September;

Collaboration

Regionally and Provincially

- ✚ Working with and supporting Niagara's FASD Coalition;
- ✚ Continuing to participate with partners in an Ontario Health Nexus Grant opportunities, with partner organizations, including Family Counselling Centre and the Niagara FASD Coalition, made up of lived experience and many organizational partners.
- ✚ Participation in the FASD Provincial Community of Practice.

Youth Wellness Hub Niagara (YWHN)

The Niagara Region YWHO is a one-stop-shop for youth ages 12-25 to access mental health, substance use, primary care, peer support, housing, education, and employment support, and a variety of skill-building and wellness activities.

All services are free of charge for youth in the Niagara Region and many are available both in-person and virtually. The Niagara Region YWHO 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. In addition to these partners, many other Niagara community service providers regularly collaborate with the Hub, such as Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON), to co-facilitate programming.

A priority of the Hub is better supporting transitional aged youth and the creation of a safe space for all young people, with 71% of youth accessing services falling between ages 15-21 and 16% identifying as gender diverse or questioning and 51% as 2SLGBTQ+ or questioning.

In 2021-22, Niagara became a pilot site for Lift/Futur en tête, providing individualized, intensive vocational and educational supports and services to help youth clients with mental health concerns find and maintain competitive employment / education training that is meaningful to them. This past year, private funding was secured to continue this programming for an additional three years.

In addition to the Lift program, the Niagara Region YWHO was also selected as one of two pilot sites to implement and deliver:

✚ YWHO's Eating Disorders Early Intervention (ED-EI) program, is an evidence-based and innovative program for youth and young adults with a first episode eating disorder. In the Niagara Region, there are limited resources for youth with concerns related to their eating and this programming works towards filling a critical gap; and

✚ PreVenture, a group-based workshop. PreVenture is an evidence-based prevention program that uses brief, personality-targeted interventions to promote mental health and delay substance use among youth. The program aims to equip youth with confidence in their ability to achieve their goals and skills to help cope with challenges that may arise.

The Hub continues to welcome more youth to the drop-in space and build on partnerships focused on supporting priority populations, including Francophone, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+, and newcomer youth. For the 2022-23 year:

✚ There was a total of 877 visits for primary care, mental health and addictions support, peer support and/or care co-ordination support;

✚ Approximately 66% of clinical visits were to see a mental health and/or substance use clinician, followed by 13% peer support, and 10% primary care.

✚ 223 unique youth who accessed clinical/non-clinical supports; and

✚ An additional 430 skill-building and wellness activity drop-in visits.

✚ Lastly, we want to recognize and extend our deep appreciation to our 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.

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Financial Report

Financial Report: Fiscal Year End March 31		
	2023	2022
Revenue		
MCCSS / MOH	1,587,480	1,587,480
Rental and Other	7,072	23,549
TOTAL:	1,594,552	\$1,611,029
Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	1,171,451	1,190,643
Other Expenses (including purchased client services)	423,260	420,386
TOTAL:	1,594,711	\$1,611,029
Youth Wellness Hub Niagara		
Revenue	650,000	650,000
Expenses	650,000	650,000
TOTAL:	\$0	\$0
Other Revenues (Expenses)	\$159	\$0
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenses	\$0	\$0

Board of Directors (2022- 2023)

Chair: Todd Bright
Vice-Chair: Conrad Scala
Treasurer: Jordan Clark
Secretary: Heather Corey
Board Members:
 Nick Baxter
 Justin Creamer
 Tanja Steinbach
 Christine Sidhom
 Madison Scodellaro

Contact Niagara Staff (2022 - 2023)

Organizational Supports:

Anita Engelage (Reception/Administration)
 Jackie Frans (IT/Database Administrator)
 Liliane Guertin (Bilingual Support
 Translation/Interpretation)
 Elaine Hand (Administration/Database
 Support)
 Zibya MacLeod (Bookkeeper)
 Nadine Wallace (Executive Director)

Resource Coordinators:

Jolene Bateman
 Eva Berswick
 Joanne Bovine (Bilingual RC)
 Liana Danyliuk
 Jenna Fiello
 Heather Fowler
 Margaret Griffiths
 Kristen Hendry
 Angela Lynch
 Julie Nichols
 Fred Steinhaus
 *Ana Meager, Belinda Anderson

CSP/FAS:

Ashley Hardman (System Lead)
 Katie McKay (SPC)
 Julie Anderson (SPC)
 Cathy Gales (FASD Lead)

YWHN:

Thomas Coyne (Program Manager/Clinical
 Coordinator)
 Ali Ahmed (Youth Navigator)
 Dana Herriot (Youth Navigator)
 Melissa Diogo (Mental Health and
 Addictions Counsellor)
 Brittny Doherty (Mental Health and
 Addictions Counsellor)
 Karlie Klinck (Mental Health and Addictions
 Counsellor)
 Rachel Roy (Intake Co-ordination)

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