



Annual Report: –2023-24

Monday September 23, 2024
aussi disponible en français

Mission:

To make a positive difference for individuals, families and the communities we serve, by providing coordinated information & processes, participating in collaborative community planning, providing & 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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Wampum Agreement.***

Chair's Report

Last year, Past Chair Todd Bright concluded his report by envisioning an organization that is innovative, creative, and provides a high level of service, ready to meet any challenges ahead. His words have come to fruition throughout the 2023-2024 year, and I am proud of how Contact Niagara has continued to grow, no matter what lies ahead.

Since becoming Chair of the Board of Directors, I have had the opportunity to work closely with Executive Director Nadine Wallace. Through this collaboration, I have learned more about the staff and can confidently say that Contact Niagara is built on passion, skill, and commitment. The dedication and hard work of all staff in fulfilling our organization's Mission, Vision, and Values is truly inspiring. Success comes from teamwork, and Contact Niagara has been a leader in pursuing partnerships and creating opportunities for families and youth in Niagara.

Some of the key initiatives Contact Niagara has been an integral partner in include:

-  The Extensive Needs Proof of Concept initiative,
-  Leading community partnership to bring SNAP® programming to Niagara,
-  Continuing to build on the success of an integrated youth services hub model in Niagara through Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario.

These initiatives, among many others that Contact Niagara is leading or partnering in, are crucial to supporting families and youth during difficult times. I am proud of the work Nadine and the staff have done and proud to say they are Contact Niagara.

To support the organization, our Board of Directors also deserves a thank you. Heather Corey, Vice Chair, and Todd Bright, Past Chair, have been instrumental in identifying areas for improvement and supporting the Board and

leadership. The time and commitment from all board members, their thoughtful engagement during our meetings, and the ideas they bring forward are the foundation of how we support the leadership of Contact Niagara. Recently, we welcomed Nilan Dave to the Board of Directors, who brings a wealth of experience and knowledge.

Reflecting on the year and the successes Contact Niagara has had, I am reminded of what Past Chair Todd Bright said last year, "our system is better and stronger when we work together." He could not have been more correct. The success of Contact Niagara is built on the dedication and teamwork of its staff and leadership, as well as the partnerships it fosters within the community.

Contact Niagara has proven to be a champion and leader in the community, and I am excited to see how Contact Niagara will find new and innovative ways for service delivery, breaking down barriers, and supporting families and youth in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Conrad Scala, Board Chair

Executive Director's Report

The past four years have brought challenges for everyone, for many reasons, and each of our individual experiences have been unique, and layered. Our paths to accessing the services we needed often having barriers that weren't immediately visible to anyone but us; and those who identify as Indigenous, Francophone, Black, Brown, Muslim, part of the sexual and gender diverse communities, or experience marginalization for any other of a variety of reasons, often having to navigate additional barriers .

As I reflect on each of these past years, I am mindful of the strength, determination, and resilience of the people who reach out to Contact Niagara. We are inspired day in and

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day out, recognizing and valuing the privilege we have of hearing your stories, and the courage it takes to share them. As part of our Mission, Vision and Values, and our Strategic Planning as an agency, we have been fortunate to have, and to make, opportunities for our own learning; our own understanding of how to identify barriers and work to eliminate them.

As we approach National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Staff and Board of Contact Niagara, are committed to recognizing Canada's history and treatment of Indigenous Peoples, and of the lasting effects of colonization. We are dedicated to reconciliation through concrete actions, including financial, recruitment, educational, cultural and policy and process; and we are dedicated to providing services that are trauma-informed, and based in cultural humility, recognizing the ongoing effects of systemic racism and unconscious bias. We are aware that we must make this commitment every day and must constantly be open to new learnings and ways of doing better.

We also recognize and honour our responsibilities to Francophone Communities. We are committed to ensuring the over 15,000 members of Niagara's French speaking communities are able to exercise their rights, and access services which literally speak their language; and we continue to commit to supporting and partnering with others in Niagara to reduce barriers, and improve access to culturally competent French language services.

As acknowledged in our 2023 AGM report, some of the roles we play in the service systems supporting children, youth, young adults and their families have changed over the past year. With those changes have come exciting new opportunities, ones that have inspired us, scared us at times, and helped us grow.

I want to say thank you to the members of our Board of Directors. We are grateful for your dedication and time away from your families, to help make us better. Thank you for your commitment to ensuring we continue to strengthen and improve. To those of you who generously volunteer your time and expertise in other ways, to family members, the Youth Wellness Hub Ontario- Niagara Youth Advisory Committee, direct service partners, and to the many partners we work with in the community, we recognize the importance of your voices and cannot thank you enough for supporting members of the Niagara community.

Every year I struggle to put into words my appreciation for the people that make up the staff team at Contact Niagara. In our office kitchen, we have a number of word magnets that sit attached to our fridge. The arrangements of those words often tell a story of how we, collectively and individually, might be doing and feeling. Inevitably they are messages of hope, support, and resilience.

I feel truly grateful to work with each of you. You are flexible, committed, genuine, principled, compassionate; I am inspired by the trust you have in each other and in yourselves to risk trying new things. I am reminded every day through a kind word, a supportive act, a moment of shared silence or laughter, of the lengths you will go for each other, and how lucky I am. I continue to be immensely grateful to work with, laugh with, and continue to learn from, each of you. You are family.

For 2024-2025, We continue to lean forward, to challenge each other to always be better; to remember the importance of approaching everything from a place of curiosity, kindness, and empathy, and that working together will always keep us moving forward. We continue to commit to developing practices and programs that are co-developed with those who have lived experience, with our organizational partners, and to delivering identity-affirming care.

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I am privileged to have the above space to reflect on the past year on behalf of “our” Agency. We thank the Ministries and other funders the service partners, and particularly children, youth, families and individuals in the community, make up the shared “our”. We believe Contact Niagara belongs to and exists for the community, and we continue to be grateful for all of the opportunities we are gifted to work together, to learn together, and to partner in a multitude of ways!

and we continue to affirm everyday
#ChallengeAccepted!

*Sincerely,
Nadine Wallace, Executive Director*

2023-2024 Highlights:

As an Organization, we continue to consider ourselves fortunate to provide direct service and also partner with many others in planning and implementing changes that seek to improve services, locally and beyond. We remain steadfast in our belief that it is through these community conversations, these opportunities to build and co-develop, opportunities to engage with people with lived experience and members of different communities, with direct and indirect service partners, and with all those impacted by how services are delivered and experienced, that the best outcomes will be achieved.

This year:

✚ We continued our partnership 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;

✚ We continued to commit to prioritizing “seeing” each person’s uniqueness and experiences, to reduce barriers to service for members of the community who identify as Indigenous, Francophone, Black, 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 to ground our work in considerations of health equity. We continue to believe 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;

✚ We continued to be an active participant on the Niagara Ontario Health Team-Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara’s (NOHT-ÉSON) (<https://noht-eson.ca/>). To partner with other health and social service providers in Niagara to develop and implement changes and new approaches to deliver identity-affirming care that is integrated, co-ordinated and accessible to all;

✚ We continued our Co-ordinated 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 are 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 continued our participation on various local (e.g., Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy, Community Wellness and Wellbeing Planning), West Region, and Provincial committees;

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

✚ We continued 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; and

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✚ We continued to launch new programming in partnership with other organizations, including Brock University's *Supporting Neurodiversity through Adaptive Programming*.

2023-2024: Statistics on Intakes and Service Co-ordination:

# of Intakes Created Unique		# of Children/ Youth	Case notes Completed	# of Unique Children/ Youth
*2023/24	3,410	2,898	20,574	4,425
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

****Please note: Data reflects system change in child and youth mental health access and intake responsibilities.***

Stats: Who Called to make a referral:

2023/24	Caller / Requestor	
Self/ Family/Friend	1318	39 %
Physicians	1645	48 %
Other professionals	113	3%
School	146	4%
Police	6	~0.5%
FACS (CAS)	65	~2%
Other/Anonymous	117	~3.5%
Total	3410	100%

Other Programming Highlights:

Coordinated Service Planning (CSP)

Niagara's Coordinated Service Planning (CSP) program is a cross-sectoral collaboration of regional partners from the health, education, developmental, autism, and child/youth mental health sectors. Contact Niagara is the Coordinating Agency for CSP, which promotes the vision of a system in which children and youth with complex and/or multiple needs get timely and effective services to ensure they are able to participate fully at home, school, and in the community. Working with our partners, Service Planning Coordinators at Contact Niagara facilitate this planning process and liaise with service providers involved with the family ("the Family Team"). CSP provides families of children/youth with multiple/complex needs a single coordinated service plan that outlines the goals of the child or youth, and family, and how all their service providers will work together to achieve these goals and address identified needs. Service Planning Coordinators offer families a single point of contact to streamline information and eliminate families having to retell their story.

CSP is a framework which encourages service providers to take a holistic approach to supporting families and clients with very complex needs and to work together to develop innovative approaches to service delivery. Contact Niagara continues to be able to provide full CSP services to Francophone families seeking French language services, as well as Indigenous specific services through our ongoing partnership with De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre (DAHAC) since April of 2022. 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 culturally aware and

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inclusive services for members of Niagara's Indigenous Community.

Contact Niagara participates in the Provincial Network of Coordinating Agencies, and through this network can attest to the value of Coordinated Service Planning provincially. CSP is seen as an integral service within the complex special needs portfolio of MCCSS, and is called upon regularly to participate in new program initiatives, and and consultations with MCCSS to ensure we do our best to understand and support the needs of this very complex population of children and youth, and their families.

Niagara CSP has been in operation since April of 2021 and actively supports over 100 children/youth and their families across the region each year. Referrals for CSP are regularly received from partner service agencies in Niagara, McMaster Children's Hospital, FACS Niagara, schoolboards, and parents/caregivers themselves. A continued upward trend 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 the community.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

As professionals who work with individuals with FASD, we must acknowledge the truths that have led to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #33 and #34, and work together with Indigenous peoples and the land to increase community resources to make sure that FASD is properly diagnosed, that appropriate community supports are in place for those with FASD, to maximize the ability of people with FASD to live in the community, to adapt appropriate evaluation mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of such programs and to ensure programs are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner to address the specific needs of Indigenous persons in Canada living with FASD.



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.

The focus of the FASD program at Contact Niagara is to provide referrals, assist families to navigate services, answer questions about FASD, support Niagara in responding 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 Indigenous-specific service pathways and services.

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, and continues to collaborate regionally and provincially.

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;
-  In partnership with the Family Counselling Centre, distribution of activity kits creating opportunities for connection, (e.g., cooking classes with The Youth Wellness Hub).

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Capacity Building

- ✚ In partnership with the Family Counselling Centre, direct programs and/activities are provided to children, youth, and families in order to connect and support each other. 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;
- ✚ Working with and supporting Niagara's FASD Coalition;
- ✚ Continuing to partner on the Niagara FASD Coalition;
- ✚ Participation in the FASD Provincial Community of Practice.

It is critical that we continue to develop a better understanding regarding the prevalence of FASD and the supports children, youth and families require, and that we continue to work in partnership to provide a variety of approaches, from prevention to early intervention and ultimately an understanding of needs across the lifespan.

Extensive Needs Pilot Program

The Extensive Needs Service (ENS) is a proof of concept initiative jointly funded by the Ministries of Health, and Children, Community and Social Services. Niagara joined this pilot initiative, led in our area by Hamilton Health Sciences, in November of 2023 (currently funded to March 31, 2025). Partners from across developmental, autism, education, child and youth mental health, Indigenous health, and other sectors have come together to

partner on providing local, vital wrap-around services, for children and youth with extensive needs, including co-occurring urgent medical, physical and developmental complexities and/or social vulnerabilities.

This integrated approach works to provide co-ordinated services to address unmet need(s), and is designed to reduce barriers to accessing timely, evidence-based, culturally competent, and trauma-informed supports and treatment for some of the most vulnerable children in Niagara; 57 children, and their families, have been supported by this initiative in the first five (5) months,

Contact Niagara is excited to work with community partners, and co-lead implementation of this initiative in Niagara with the Niagara Children's Centre.

SNAP® (Stop Now and Plan)

In October 2023, Contact Niagara, in partnership with education, the Welland YMCA, Niagara College, multi-cultural organizations, Indigenous organizations, and others submitted a successful application for a Community Safety and Well-being Grant (CSWB), funded by Public Safety Canada. We are thrilled to be working with community partners, to implement and deliver SNAP® community programming for ages 6-11 years.

SNAP®, developed in 1985 by the Child Development Institute, an accredited children's mental health organization, has grown and evolved into an internationally recognized set of programs. SNAP® is an evidence-based, cognitive behavioural model, that provides a framework for teaching children, and their parents/caregivers, struggling with specific behavioural concerns, effective emotional regulation, self-control and problem-solving skills. The primary goal of SNAP® is to help

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children to stop and think before they act, and keep them in school and “out of trouble”.

Stats: March to August, 2024:

- 43 children (and their siblings/families) connected and supported in some way;
- 31 Intakes completed;
- 2 Groups completed spring 2024;
- 3 Groups running fall 2024.

The CSWB grant will end December 31, 2025, and Niagara continues to explore opportunities for more sustainable funding to continue to provide this critical early intervention programming in Niagara.

Niagara Region, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO)

The Niagara Region YWHO is an integrated youth service (IYS) site for youth ages 12-25 to access mental health, substance use, primary care, peer support, care coordination, employment support, and a variety of skill-building and wellness activities.

The youth hub is primarily located in Welland, and all services are free of charge for youth in the Niagara Region, with many available both in-person and virtually. The Niagara Region YWHO is collaboration between a variety of community organizations, including the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton-Niagara, John Howard Society of Niagara, Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON), the Niagara Falls Community Health Centre, and the Niagara Falls Library, with Contact Niagara acting as the Network Lead.

In 2023-24, the hub received 1307 visits for clinical and non-clinical supports (305 unique youth) and 447 visits for skill-building and wellness activities (total visits were 1754). Of these visits, 77% were accessing hub services for the first time. The most requested supports were mental health/substance use

counselling (60%), primary care (14%), peer support (14%), and employment supports (10%). A priority of the Hub is to better support transitional aged youth and the creation of a safe space for all young people, with 67% of youth accessing services falling between ages 15-21. Approximately 19% of youth accessing services identify as gender diverse or questioning and 47% as 2SLGBQ+ or questioning. Lastly, 10% of young people identified as Indigenous, 9% as Black, and 5% as South Asian.

This year, Niagara received philanthropic funding to continue delivering the Lift/Futur en tête program, which provides 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. Additionally, Niagara began implementation of YWHO's Eating Disorders Early Intervention (ED-EI) program, 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. Preliminary data collected suggests that over half of youth accessing mental health and substance use supports at the hub reported high concern related to their eating (measured using the Ottawa Disordered Eating Screen for Youth).

As the Niagara Region YWHO site has developed, we have continued to look for opportunities to better support youth in the Region. One of the main barriers we have heard from young people in accessing services is challenges related to transportation, particularly for youth without access to a vehicle. As a step towards reducing this barrier, we have partnered with the Niagara Falls Library Stamford Branch and begun offering hub services one day a week in Niagara Falls. This particular location has a high density of

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transitional aged youth, and we are excited to be able to bring our service offerings to this part of the Region.

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.

Location
225 East Main St.
Welland ON L3B 3W7
Canada

Hours Of Operation
Monday – Thursday: 11:00 am- 7:00 pm
Friday: 10:00 a-2:00 pm

Contact
Location: 225 East Main St, Welland ON
(Ground Floor)

To access or learn more about services:

Call: 905-229-9946
Email: ywhn.signup@gmail.com

Learn more about the Youth Wellness
Hub Niagara Region on social media:
Instagram: [@ywhniagara](https://www.instagram.com/ywhniagara)
Facebook: [@ywhniagara](https://www.facebook.com/ywhniagara)

youth
wellness
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**Financial Report- Year End March 31,
2024**

Financial Report:		
	2024	2023
Revenue		
MCCSS / MOH	1,601,935	1,587,480
Youth Wellness Hub Niagara	920,134	
Rental and Other	162,599	7,072
TOTAL:	2,684,668	1,594,552
Expenses		
All Salaries & Benefits	2,069,734	1,171,451
All Other Expenses (including purchased client services)	614,934	423,260
TOTAL:	2,684,668	1,594,711
Youth Wellness Hub Niagara		
Revenue	Please See Above	650,000
Expenses		650,000
TOTAL:	\$0	\$0
Other Revenues (Expenses)	13,550	\$159
Excess Ministry (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenses	\$0	\$0

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Contact Niagara Staff (2023 - 2024)

Organizational Supports:

Anita Engelage (Reception/Admin)
Jackie Frans (IT/Database Administrator)
Liliane Guertin (Bilingual Support
Translation/Interpretation)
Elaine Hand (Admin. /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/FASD:

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)
Brittney Doherty (Mental Health and
Addictions Counsellor)
Karlie Klinck (Mental Health and Addictions
Counsellor)
Rachel Roy (Mental Health and Addictions
Counsellor)

Board of Directors (2023- 2024)

Chair: Conrad Scala

Vice-Chair: Heather Corey

Treasurer: Jordan Clark

Secretary: Christine Sidhom

Board Members:

Nick Baxter
Todd Bright
Tanja Steinbach
Madison Scodellaro



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