

dc  distress and crisis ontario  
détresse et crise ontario

## 2019-20 Annual Report





## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way. Victor Frankl

Last year I was the new Executive Director, getting to know DCO, the needs of the members, with changes in the health care sector on the horizon. Who would have thought that this year, I would find myself navigating an equally novel situation? Only this time I am in the company of the global village under the cloud of a pandemic.

In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, I write this greeting. If I thought I was busy last year trying to get up to speed to lead this nimble organization, this year was frenetic. The world shifted and changed in what seems like overnight. We became lost in the vortex of time, at least I feel like I did. In a few short days, we had to pivot to meet the onslaught of quick shuttering, many lives lost and no road map.

Yet, spring came. Trees budded, tulips blossomed and baby bunnies scampered across vacant trails; Mother Nature steadfastly remained the same as much of the world went through rapid-fire change. At DCO, and in each of our member centers, we answered the call of our communities and responded to twice as many calls, dealing with more complex issues and sharing our knowledge and experience to benefit as many as possible. For example, I collaborated with some partners from the Waterloo region and produced a document on Grief and Loss to assist those dealing with many differing types of grief and loss during the pandemic; loss of a job, social closeness, physical gatherings, loss of the “normal” we knew and ultimately loss through death. This document can be viewed via this link <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/grief-dying-and-death-during-a-pandemic>.

We hurriedly sheltered from the “storm”; and we showed our humanity by reaching out to assist others. Over the last 10 weeks, we showed up for our shifts despite the fear of possible infection, we stayed home in soul scorching loneliness, and we made Personal Protective Equipment by the thousands! Masks, gowns, hand sanitizers, hard surface disinfectant etc.

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves said Victor Frankl. And change ourselves we did; we became teachers of our school aged children, caregivers to family members who could no longer attend day programs all the while maintaining our previous roles in a novel context enduring the uncertainty of when will it end, am I doing it correctly and how am I going to cope because the day is still only 24hrs long. So many rose to the challenge and changed themselves in that human way where we support others in their time of need - the essence of Distress Centers, with a volunteer base service that has been around for over 50years! ONtogether, [ONtogether.org](http://ONtogether.org) is a not for profit Foundation which quickly organized to assist charities like ourselves to raise money by selling these beautiful wartime-like posters. It is an act of hope, beauty and connection that spreads the message that we will survive this and thrive even. History taught us that.

The 2019-2020 Annual Report will provide us with our customary review of existing services, while some activities came to an abrupt halt some new ones took their place. For example, we are not able to have the annual conference in person but we are planning on an improved version for next April 2021. The Annual General Meeting will be a virtual meeting versus and in person and, the Volunteer Awards have been delayed until we can appropriately celebrate in person. COVID has highlighted the need for us to establish a benchmark of baseline training (certification) of our volunteers to recognize their skills, competencies and the value they provide in the continuum of Mental Health and Addictions. This will also protect the public as there will be clarity on competence level and economy of scale in training for the centers especially as we look to training virtually.

We have been doing this for over 50 years! Wow over 50 years! We are resilient. This is the message we share with Callers and we live it! This time next year as I write this address, I know I will be lauding your heroic efforts big and small in conquering COVID-19 and looking to a much brighter day because of what we had endured, lessons learned and the improved way that we come and stay together.

I wish to acknowledge the dedication of the Board in providing Governing excellence; and thank the membership for sharing their data and experience, which I could pass along to the province for planning. You saved valuable time and made a meaningful contribution to provincial planning. This information helped paint a picture of distress and crisis in Ontario especially in the “quick sand” days of the rapidly evolving COVID.

I pledge to continue serving DCO and its membership so that we can do our best to meet the emerging mental health needs of Ontarians in this new world we are creating so that we can thrive together.

Warm regards

**Neta Gear | Executive Director**

May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears...Nelson Mandela



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

If I were asked a year ago, what 2020 would be like, I would not have predicted a major pandemic that turned the world upside-down. However, if I gazed into a crystal ball, I would have accurately predicted that DCO would continue to adapt and be fluid with the changing world. Neta Gear, DCO’s executive director, has met this new challenge head on; she has adapted to the changing times and aligned DCO strategic directions with the new world. As of our AGM, she will now have been leading our organization for over a year and a half. She continues to move DCO forward and is extremely motivated towards understanding and expanding the work of DCO.

DCO remains committed to its strategic priorities and has extended the strategic plan and additional two years, to 2022. The board of directors revisited our strategic plan, with input from the Executive Director’s engagement with member centres. Neta made many road trips to visit member centres. Relationship building and capacity building continue to be two key strategic priorities, along with stability. Accountability, collaboration and empowerment, accessibility, inclusion, integrity, and leadership continue to be key organizational values that guide DCO. DCO has been developing relationships and collaborating with various community partners, including Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, our funder, the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, and other private funders.

Another of our key strategic priorities is to enhance member benefits and services. DCO, along with committee volunteers continue to work hard to provide relevant and informative podcasts. DCO has been fluid in adapting to the impact of the pandemic by providing webinars and bulletins for the members to assist them in understanding what the news of the day means. Member centres continue to reach out, participate and engage with DCO. One member centre sought DCO’s assistance with producing a framework for death, grief and loss. Another appreciated DCO facilitating it to have a spot at a Regional planning table.

DCO welcomes our new Board member to be ratified at the AGM. Some are returning, and others new. We value the generosity and dedication our Board members give to DCO. I would like to thank our existing Board of Directors for their generous time and knowledge they have given to DCO.

Finally, I would like to say that I have had a great honour to be involved with DCO since 2013, in my various roles as treasurer, vice-chair, and now chair of the board. My term as chair is coming to an end. I have great confidence in our new leadership and know DCO will go to where it needs to be.

**Colleen Gallagher | Board Chair**

**Capacity Building for Responders and Staff**

- Dedicated Learning Forums Website
- Online Lunch and Learn Sessions for Centre Leaders
- Webinar Series for Staff and Volunteers
- Monthly eNews+Views Newsletter
- Educational Podcasts

**Learning Forums Website**

The online Learning Forums website currently has a catalogue of 56 different topics presented in video format with additional related text information. A summary quiz is provided for each video which users can complete in order to review or test their learning after viewing the video.

**Educational Podcasts**

Our podcast services is a new addition to our Educational Services. It aims at offering a new modality to share information and engage our Responders and the community. We offer professional and Lay person perspectives on current and ongoing topics for example the first quarter converted our existing Learning Forums into an audio format while the 2nd quarter had us providing new materials to assist with the rapidly evolving COVID-19. We are exploring ways of how we can better serve our community utilising podcasting to engage, share information and build community.

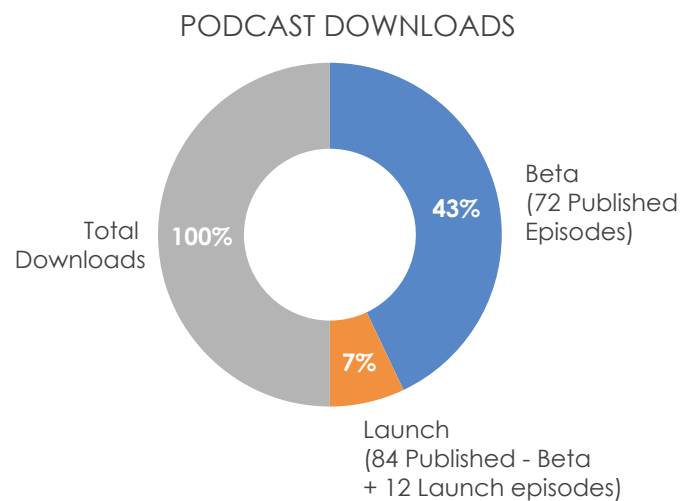
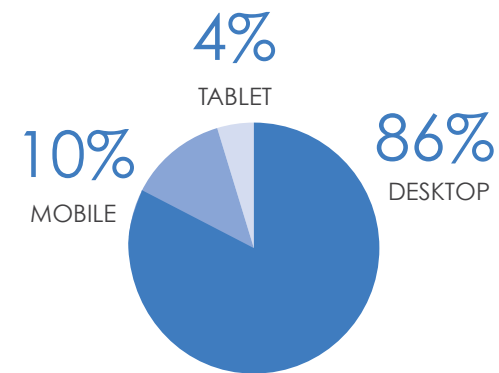
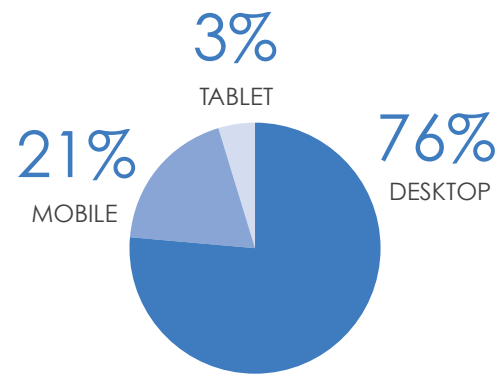
**Newsletters** (Average sent 360)

- FALL 2019 [Click Here to View](#)
- JUL 2019 [Click Here to View](#)
- MAY 2019 [Click Here to View](#)
- APR 2019 [Click Here to View](#)
- MAR 2019 [Click Here to View](#)
- FEB 2019 [Click Here to View](#)

**LUNCH AND LEARN SESSIONS**

The Covid-19 pandemic took hold in Ontario in March 2020. DCO responded with Lunch and Learn sessions designed to provide our member organization senior leaders the opportunity to gather and discuss how the situation is affecting them, their staff, their clients, and their organization. The situation was evolving rapidly and information available was constantly changing. DCO felt it important to share up-to-date information and allow our members to share their own experiences and how they are responding to these unprecedented times. We hosted 3 sessions and received positive feedback and thanks from those who attended.

To supplement these sessions, DCO posted bulletins and rearranged our website so ensure that information was more easily found.





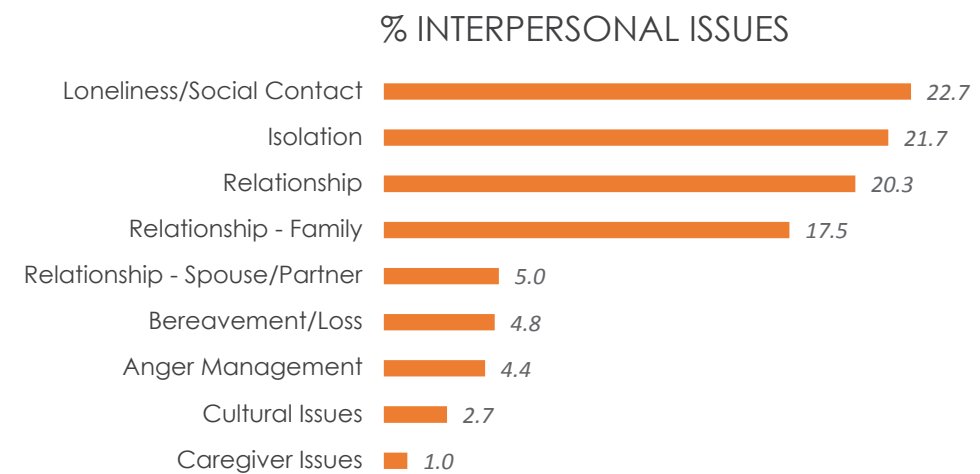
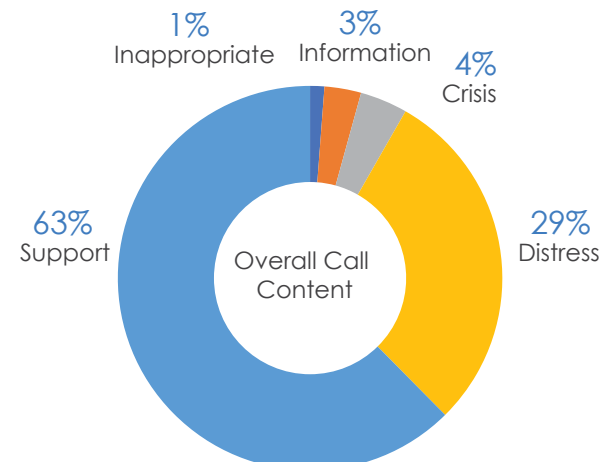
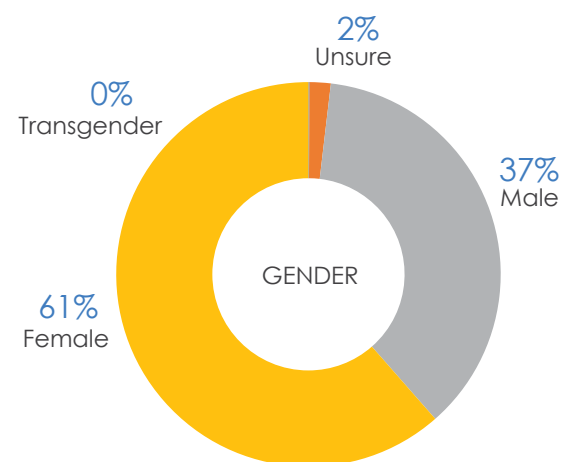
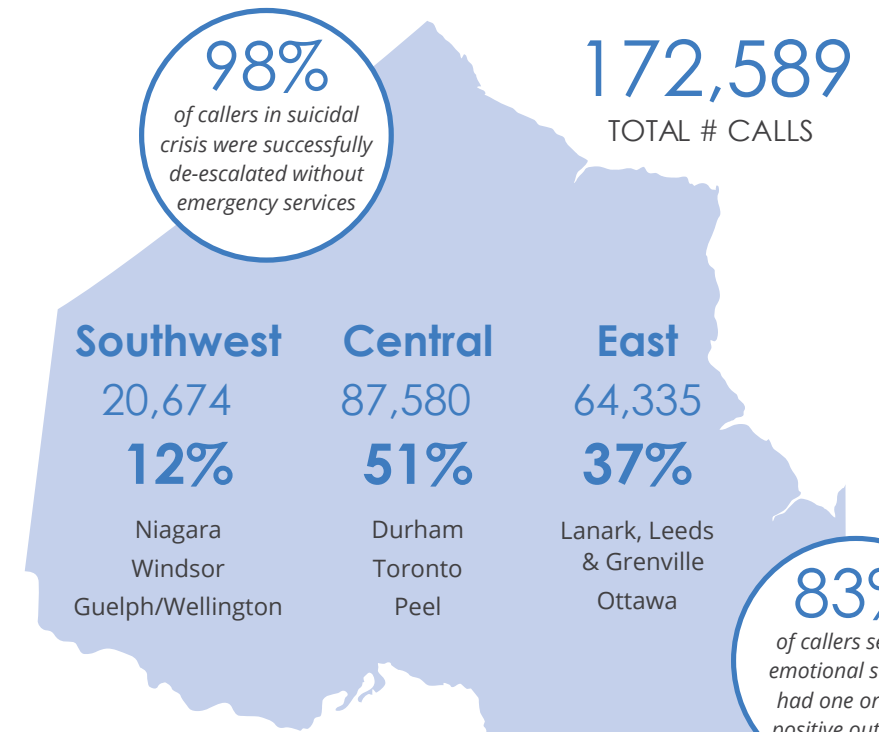
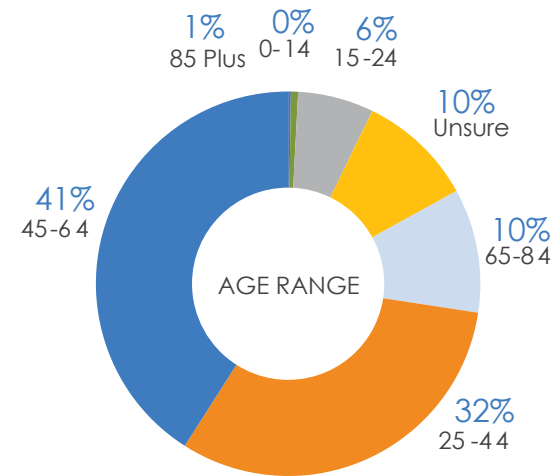
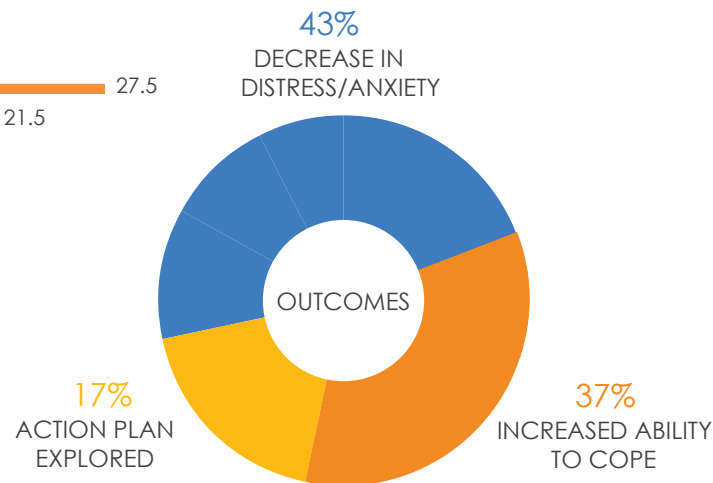
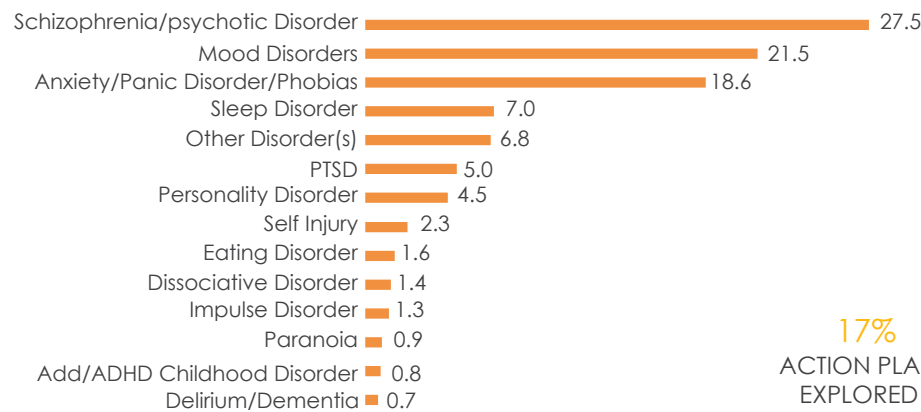
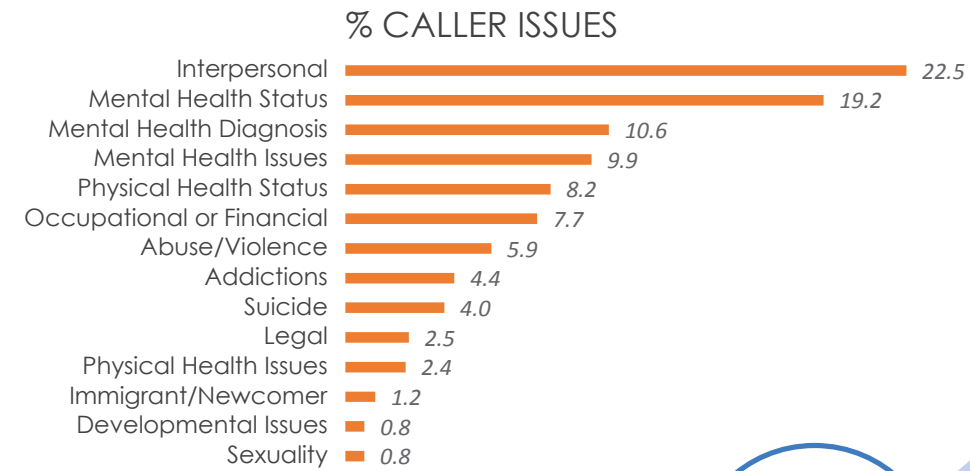
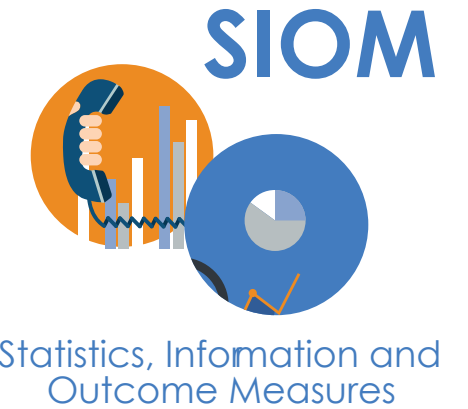
**SIOM (statistics, information and outcome measures)**

SIOM provides DCO member organizations with information to compare their program statistics and outcomes with the provincial aggregate information; it is a powerful management tool available to DCO organizations. The detailed SIOM statistical review, published annually, highlights contact issues/concerns, demographics, suicide statistics as well as outcome measures of the support provided during interactions.

DCO member organizations across Ontario provided emotional support, distress management and crisis intervention services in response to 172,589 contacts in 2019. This number is lower than the previous year as we are unable to collect and share the data of some of our members. This lower number is in no way an indicator of lower numbers of calls as the data we have captured for specific organisations shows an increase in callers.

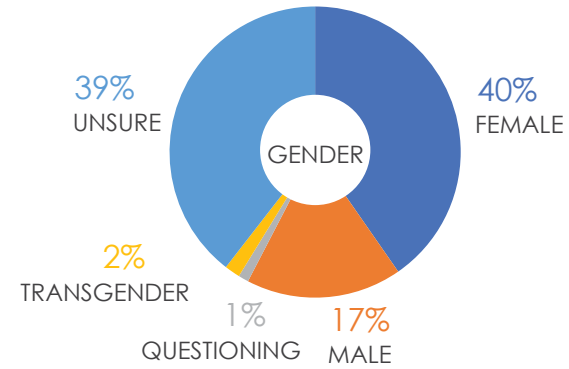
What were Ontarians experiencing when they accessed distress and crisis services? The detailed 2019 data continues to reveal the wide range of complex issues faced by those who reach out for help. In 2019, a majority of those specifically experiencing distress or crisis when accessing services experienced one or more positive outcomes. Loneliness, isolation and relationship issues continues to be the top three reasons people reach out for services with the 45-64 age demographic being the highest users followed by the 24-44 age range and, females making approximately 61% of callers. Regarding suicide intervention, 98% of callers experiencing a suicidal crisis were successfully deescalated without involving emergency services, effectively preventing ER visits across Ontario. This is an increase of 3% from the previous year.

Drilling down to specific areas of concern, the top three reported mental health diagnoses are schizophrenia, mood disorders and anxiety disorders, consistent with last years data. Outcomes continue to be positive with 43% having decrease in distress/anxiety and 37% having an increased ability to cope.

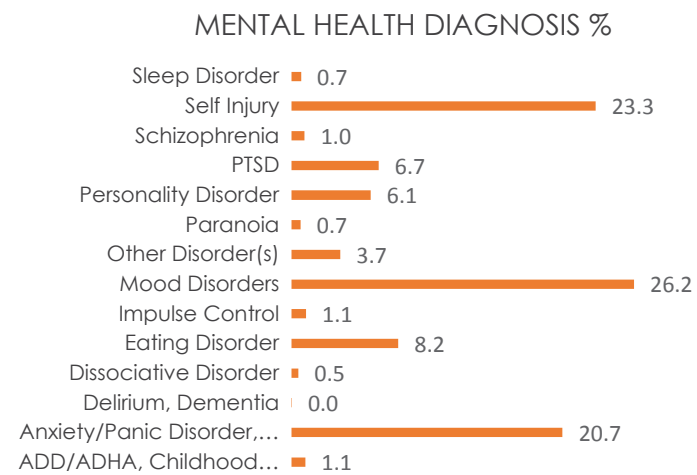
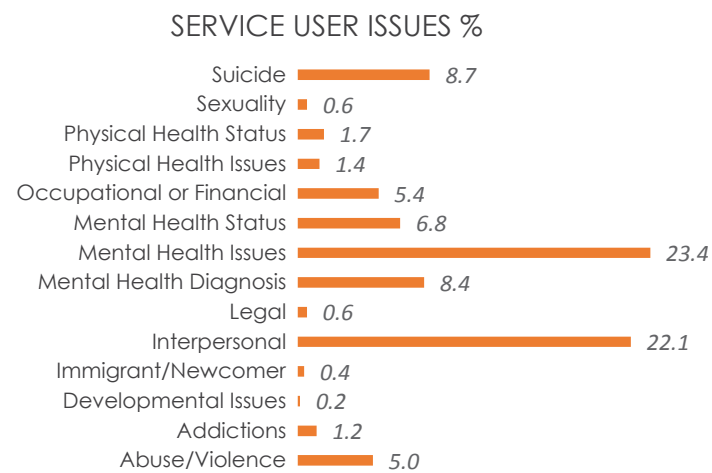
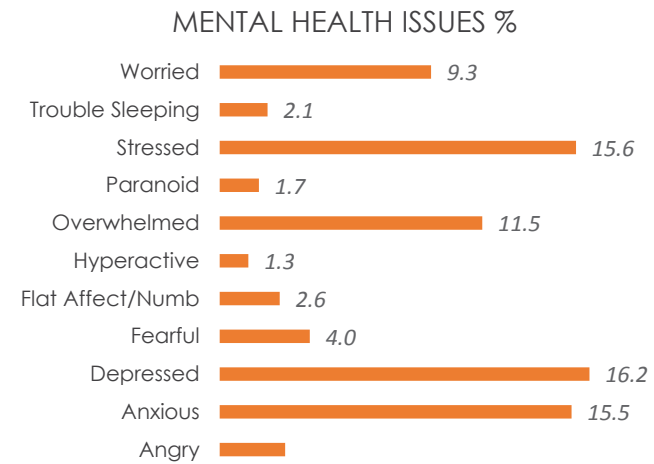
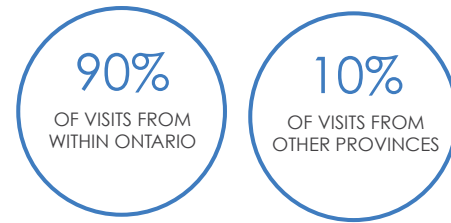


## ONTX (ONTARIO ONLINE & TEXT CRISIS SERVICES)

The Online Chat & Text (ONTX) service allows individuals in the community to communicate with us without having to speak over the phone on one of our crisis lines. It is a safe, confidential, one-on-one conversation with a highly-trained volunteer responder. The following stats represent activity tracked for the ONTX service during the 2019 fiscal year.



8,716  
TOTAL # TEXTS/CHATS



## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Spirit of Volunteerism Recognition



SOV Nominees and Recipients at the 2019 Spirit of Volunteerism Recognition Event.

2019 was a very busy year for both DCO and for our member organizations and time was tight for all. This resulted in a smaller than usual number of SOV nominations and a smaller than usual SOV Recognition event. This, however, did not change our desire to recognize the wonderful individuals who give so much of themselves to their communities.

On Friday, June 21st, 2019 we celebrated the 12th anniversary of the Spirit of Volunteerism Recognition at the Holiday Inn in Kitchener, Ontario.

We were pleased to welcome guests, including nominees and recipients, their friends and family, and their cheerleaders from their member organizations who joined DCO for an evening of celebration.

Volunteers are at the core of the work that our member distress and crisis organizations do for their communities. Their dedication and commitment are the "life blood" of distress and crisis centers. Each year, through the Spirit of Volunteerism Recognition, we acknowledge those exemplary volunteers who display consistently the finest qualities we aspire to. We take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers; your work is appreciated.

### 2019 Nominees and Recipients:

**Laxmi Aryal**  
TorchLight  
Young Adult

**Megan Clemens**  
Telephone Aid Line Kingston  
Young Adult

**Holly Coutts**  
Telephone Aid Line Kingston  
Young Adult (Recipient)

**Mike Neill**  
Distress Centre of Ottawa & Region  
(Recipient)

**Isidora Nezic**  
TorchLight

**Bill Snow**  
Distress Centre Niagara

# statement of financial position

>MARCH 31, 2020

	2020	2019
<b>assets</b>		
<b>current</b>		
Cash	\$ 154,085	\$ 73,804
Accounts receivable (Note 3)	9,669	51,732
Prepaid expenses	<u>6,632</u>	<u>5,817</u>
	<b>\$ <u>170,386</u></b>	<b>\$ <u>131,353</u></b>
<b>liabilities</b>		
<b>current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 24,758	\$ 26,123
Deferred revenue (Note 4)	<u>26,382</u>	<u>26,907</u>
	<u>51,140</u>	<u>53,030</u>
<b>net assets</b>		
<b>general</b>		
	79,246	63,323
<b>restricted funds</b>		
Internally restricted - contingency reserve	15,000	15,000
Internally restricted - strategic reserve	<u>25,000</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>119,246</u>	<u>78,323</u>
	<b>\$ <u>170,386</u></b>	<b>\$ <u>131,353</u></b>

## A LOOK BACK AT MY TIME WITH DCO



I started with Distress Crisis Ontario, DCO in August of 2011, working through a temp agency, knowing nothing about the organization and how they work to support their communities. My first day at work I was alone in the office updating DCO's membership list and that was my first contact with the wonderful people who make up our DCO family. In September of that year, there was a Networking Day and the SOV Recognition event and I got to put some faces to names, and in February of 2012 I became an employee of DCO.

Over the years, I've met a lot of our members, their staff and volunteers, and I've developed some relationships with many that I very much enjoy.

I've witnessed evolution, comings and goings, always they have been dedicated to the work that we do in this sector. I was looking forward to seeing some of you again at this annual meeting, but unfortunately that was not meant to be.

I've seen changes in our organization and I've seen big events and projects. In 2012 we hosted a national conference in Niagara Falls, the Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention annual conference. We celebrated the 10th anniversary of the SOV Recognition program, an event that always amazes me with the strength, dedication and compassion of the people who volunteer to support those in need in their communities. I have tremendous admiration for the volunteers and what they do. I witnessed the birth of our ONTX program from an idea at a strategic planning session through to the successful program it has become. I've seen DCO members come and go, and return, and I've seen member centre Executive Directors change, along with our own!

The most recent change for DCO was a move to being a virtual organization. I had already started working from home for the most part, but if the recent situation has proved anything, it's that we can work successfully without a physical office. So as our lease in Kitchener ended, our Association went virtual. Neta and I have found a way to work together in our separate locations, and when physical distancing is over we plan to meet over coffee or lunch periodically to keep the connection and the good relationship we've developed.

For a long time my plan was to be retired before this Annual General Meeting. My pat response to the question "what do you want to be when you grow up" was always "Retired!". And I had a date, and I did a countdown (there's an app for that)! My retirement plans include spending more time at the historic village where I volunteer as a costumed interpreter. I split my time between 2 time periods, 1860 and 1912, and I thoroughly enjoy showing visitors around the houses, telling them the history of the buildings, cooking period recipes on a wood cookstove, and trying to answer questions about everyday life. It's so much fun to dress up and time travel!

But here I am, still working for DCO, but from home and with reduced hours. Who knows how long this will continue but I suspect that this may be my last Annual General Meeting I'll be helping with. However, in the meantime I'm happy to stay to support Neta, and to support our members whose work is so important.

**Jackie Grigsby**  
Administrative and Program Facilitator

### DCO Board of Directors 2019-2020

[Colleen Gallagher \(Chair\)](#)  
[Ron Dunn \(Vice Chair\) \(resigned\)](#)  
[Diwa Satkunanathan \(Secretary/Treasurer\)](#)  
[Peter Donnelly](#)  
[Janice Gardner-Spiece](#)  
[Shri Kalyanasundara](#)  
[Glen Katsnelson](#)  
[Matthew Sem](#)  
[Stacy Terry](#)

### DCO Staff

[Neta Gear – Executive Director](#)  
[Jackie Grigsby – Administrative & Program Facilitator](#)  
[Cindy Slavik – ONTX and SIOM Coordinator](#)

### Member Agencies (March 31, 2020)

[CMHA Middlesex](#)  
[Distress Centre Durham](#)  
[Distress Centre Halton](#)  
[Telephone Aid Line Kingston \(TALK\)](#)  
[Developmental Services of Leeds and Grenville](#)  
[Distress Centre Niagara](#)  
[Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Helpline](#)  
[Distress Centre Ottawa & Region](#)  
[Talk 4 Healing \(Beendigen Inc\)](#)  
[Tel-Aide Outaouais](#)  
[Family Counselling & Support Services Distress Line \(formerly Torchlight\)](#)  
[Downtown Mission / Distress Centre Windsor-Essex](#)

Contact information for member centres can be found on our website at [dcontario.org](http://dcontario.org)

We appreciate the generous financial support of our long-term funder:



We also wish to thank the individuals who provide support to our programs via CanadaHelps.org on our website

