

**THRIVE
COUNSELLING
ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021**



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Thrive Counselling is pleased to present our 2020-21 Annual Report to our community and stakeholders.

Quite the year! In my wildest imagination, it did not occur to me that I might be reporting to our community on a year spent in the midst of a global pandemic. In this moment, we are currently seeing a hopeful way forward fueled by vaccinations, better weather and some very hard lessons around how things actually work. Thrive, like most other organizations, has had to dig deeply into our collective selves to find a path through a year that I deeply hope is no more than once in a lifetime.

There have been many lessons arising as a result of the changes that have been required to respond to the pandemic. Pivoting has become a critical daily skill, as has flexibility, innovation and a willingness to undo and rework the pillars and procedures of everyday life. These are no easy tasks and they have been required repeatedly and continue to be required as we navigate to post-pandemic life.

This year of physical, and often social and political unrest, has lead many people back to be focussed on core values and purpose. In uncertain times, leaning in to who we are, what we are trying to accomplish and the principles that guide the how of the way things are done can be the most steadying of forces.

Our Vision: STRONG PEOPLE
STRONG FAMILIES, STRONG COMMUNITIES

Our Mission: WE PARTNER WITH YOU TO MANAGE LIFE'S
CHALLENGES

Our Values: CARE AND COMPASSION, RESPECT AND DIGNITY,
PROFESSIONALISM AND QUALITY, INCLUSION AND SAFETY

Our mission is achieved by offering exceptional counselling services and programs to individuals, couples and families for issues concerning emotional, physical, social, spiritual and relational well-being. Thrive is committed to inclusion, diversity and equity and embedding these principles in all of our policies and practices. We strive to operate in a manner that ensures cultural safety which we interpret as an environment which is physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally safe for people and where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity of who they are and what they need.

THRIVE SERVICES



Individual Counselling Family Visiting Centres Couple Counselling Violence Against Women



Partner Assault Response

Employee Assistance

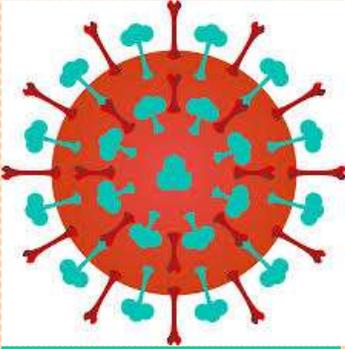
Family Counselling

Safety Zone

Professional Education & Training

Thrive has offices in Burlington, Oakville, Milton & Georgetown as well as providing virtual services.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE



**SOCIAL DISTANCING
STAND HERE**



Mid March 2020 – Pandemic Response Begins

Physical offices close - Service pivots to telephone and video services

Summer 2020

Virtual group programs come on line and in-person services begin to resume in a limited basis.

Agency creates and implements re-opening plan including needed safety protocols

January 2021 – Second Wave closes in-person services and all programs revert to virtual modalities.

March 2021 – Vaccination of health care commences allowing reopening of limited in-person counselling services as the third wave begins.

.....more changes to come

Working Together

A frequent tagline of the pandemic is that we are all in this together. There is little question that this is truly the case as this global pandemic has vividly highlighted our interdependency regarding both risks, responses and remedies. More critically, it has highlighted the disparity of experience that results from the same storm and that a collective response has the ability to make the unimaginable possible. Thrive has worked closely with our collaborative tables, funders, local Halton service providers and Family Service Ontario to weather this storm. There is no doubt that many of our partnerships and collaborations have been strengthened as we have leaned on each other to get through.

**Halton Equity and Diversity Roundtable
Mental Health & Addictions Tables
Family Service Ontario
Connected Care Halton Ontario Health team
Burlington Ontario Health team
Halton Collective Against Human Trafficking
Sexual Assault Advisory Committee
Community safety & Well-being Committee
Halton Violence Prevention Council
Family Law Advisory Committee
Halton Justice Steering Coordinating Committee
United Way Agencies Support Meetings**

Annual Report to the Community:



The Halton Violence Prevention Council successfully navigated many of the challenges of the year and were able to continue progress on many of our goals and initiatives.

A key objective of the Council's strategic plan is to spread awareness and knowledge about Violence Against Women and the work of HVPC. This is being accomplished through the creation and distribution of social media posts and campaigns and utilizing additional social media platforms. We have maintained a virtual presence through our website and included updates to spread awareness about our members and partnerships. Significantly, with the help of some one-time funding, we were able to modernize the website to improve usability and upgraded it to comply with accessibility requirements.

The Sexual Assault Advisory, a sub-committee of HVPC, also started work on a website project to improve the accessibility and quality of services for survivors of sexual violence. The website will respond to an existing gap, acting as a touchpoint between law enforcement, services and survivors that are struggling in silence and without support. It will create a space where survivors can obtain support, knowledge, information and awareness, but also share their experiences and feedback in a confidential way with the community partners of their choice. It will provide the opportunity to gain valuable insight into existing barriers for reporting to police or accessing services. We can then improve our community's response to sexual violence and better support survivors.

Additionally, the Advisory supported the re-development of e-training for the Halton Regional Police Service on Trauma-Informed Police investigations with topics including consent, rape myths, higher risk populations, bias and review of the neurobiology of trauma. This was originally being deployed as in-person and was interrupted by the pandemic.

The Council hosted our first ever Open House virtually in November as part of Woman Abuse Prevention Month. We were very pleased to welcome our newest public members to the committee during this event. The month included a social media campaign as well as support for the launch of a women's memorial with the Halton Regional Police Service and Halton Women's Place.

The Council and its committees continued to collaborate with our wider community. The HVPC sub-committee Sexual Assault Advisory continues as an action table for the region's Community Safety and Well Being committee and participates with other action tables to share information and explore synergies. HVPC remained an active member with Halton's Anti-Human Trafficking Committee (HCAHT), a collaborative committee with various partners from justice, health, housing and children's mental health.

Other key activities included sharing experiences and advice in provincial-wide VAW surveys and providing access and support for the Safety Planning booklet virtually while working on revisions and updates. The committee continued work on developing a matrix for assessing risk of violence and lethality assessments currently in use so as to update and develop consensus for tools used in the community. We continue to champion the use of the Advisory-supported Sexual Assault Information Guide by Victim's Services during the first point of contact meetings with survivors sharing their experiences.

As always, the Council's activities were greatly supported by SAFE, our member Survivor's group. In addition to their own initiatives, they have continually provide consultation, guidance, support and input to HVPC, its projects and to the community.

As with everyone, the Council and our members were deeply challenged by the impacts of the pandemic. Member challenges include transitioning services and programs to virtual, communicating changes and information, ensuring accessibility to people who have barriers to services, changes to shelter capacity, reimagining residential services and the impact of pandemic stressors on violence risks. We have been pleased to support each other during these changes and see potential benefits that have emerged from our mitigation efforts which will continue into the future.

We look forward to continuing our work to end violence of all forms in our community.

Message from the Board Chair:

AL ALBANO

Looking back on the work of Thrive during 2020-21, it is very evident to me that Thrive is a strong, resourceful and resilient organization. So much has been accomplished and this is due to the dedication and commitment of the staff of the organization. The Board has been very pleased to be able to provide support to management and help navigate the difficult tides that the organization has faced in the last year.

These developments have clearly impacted our current strategic plan. Growth objectives have required adjustments to focus more closely on stability and strength. We have reviewed our plans given these emergent trends and find that our commitments to organizational development and quality measures remain highly relevant despite requiring some adjustments to reflect changes. We will continue to closely monitor our strategic plans so that Thrive is well-positioned to take advantage of any opportunities arising from the movement out of the pandemic into a changed world.

The Board continues to prioritize fiscal sustainability. Thrive has been successful in navigating significant financial challenges and opportunities this year and we are positive about ending the year in good financial standing. We are aware that there are some significant challenges in front of us and are committed to providing appropriate support to weather these challenges and ensure the stability of the agency.

The Board itself has adapted well to pandemic-related changes. We have been functioning effectively virtually and have been able to work well in this new modality. I would like to particularly thank my fellow Board members, who have given generously of their time, including additional meetings and sub-committee work to support the needs of the organization. We have some long-standing Board members ending their terms this year and I wish to acknowledge their significant contributions from pre-merger to the present.

The Board recognizes that the agency has been impacted by the social equity issues that have been particularly prominent over this past year. We would like to express our commitment to the principles of equity and inclusion and ensuring that the agency is able to successfully operationalize these critical values.

Message from our Executive Director:

CHONDRENA VIEIRA-MARTIN

The year 2020-2021 will forever be remembered as the pandemic year with the full fiscal was spent in the thick of this global event. There is very little that happened that was not touched or influenced by the pandemic, our collective efforts to respond to it and manage operations under its shadow.

As I write this, we are currently seeing the light at the end of a very long tunnel. We are not where we hope to be yet but can tentatively begin to imagine and hope for a safer future with more freedoms.

The pandemic provoked numerous, substantive challenges. The most notable was the complete re-invention of our service model from 100% in-person services to a full virtual model. A planned change like this would normally be years in the making and instead we were able to navigate this within weeks for much of the agency.

This leads me to the bright lights in my report. There have been very many stressful, hectic and often frustrating days. What has been truly remarkable and awe-inspiring is how the staff and Board have pulled together to make the impossible possible. When I look back and reflect on what has been accomplished and how much new knowledge, practice and technology we have mastered, it defies all expectations and even imagination. I could not have envisioned the scenarios which are part of our new reality.

This has been a challenging time for staff. I have yet to speak with any individuals who have not been personally upended in some way by the pandemic. In the midst of that, staff are assisting people who have often been more seriously impacted by this heavy storm. The stories are harder. Our personal resources are stretched thin. And the demands to stretch into greater newness and uncertainty have been unremitting.

I am so very proud of our agency and of each and every individual who has risen to the challenges with which they have been presented. Without the deep and abiding commitment and dedication that has been demonstrated by the teams, we would not have been so successful in our transformation. To each and every person, I express my deepest gratitude for your efforts and energy.

With all of our efforts, therapists have been able to provide over 7200 counselling sessions, closely matching what we were able to do in the previous non-pandemic year. Our Supervised Access Program was still able to serve 73 families, also providing 126 in-person visits, 214 virtual visits and 37 exchanges. We are proud of our efforts to maintain contact between parents and children who would otherwise be separated by the pandemic. Our PAR program staff provided interim support to clients including starting a youtube channel teaching helpful coping strategies for those in need. PAR administrators laboriously converted group intake to individual video sessions working through and preventing many technical challenges. Additionally, staff created innovative ways to safely manage virtual groups working to lower risks while still providing meaningful benefit.

The other striking positive has been our focus on collaborations and support. The laying bare of inequities revealed by the pandemic, as well as racism-invoked social unrest has brought a new level of shared introspection to our agency and community. There have been unprecedented conversations about racism, diversity, inclusion, mental health and well-being of staff both internally and across local agencies as well as across our provincial association. It has been unexpected and hopeful to witness a tangible shift in the depth of these conversations and see opportunities to move forward agendas that reflect our agency's missions, vision and values.

There is still much to be done and we are not yet out of the woods. Disturbing trends in family and intimate partner violence as well as mental well-being suggest that the road ahead of us is likely to be rough in many ways. Known challenges and ongoing uncertainty will still be a feature of daily life for some time.

Despite this knowledge, there is much reason for optimism. When you have routinely and repeatedly defeated barriers and pushed out the borders of possibility, there is every reason to be confident in a workable path forward. Things will undoubtedly look different on the other side. However if we utilize the hard lessons available to us over this past year, we are well-positioned to create a better place.

Sincerely Chondrena

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS AND DONORS

The Board and staff of Thrive offer our huge gratitude for the support of the services we have provided to families in Halton.

We are very thankful for the support and responsiveness of our funders throughout this year. Specifically we would deeply thank:

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services supports:

- the Violence against Women counselling services for women and their children
- the work of the Halton Violence Prevention Council,

Ministry of the Attorney General which supports:

- the Partner Abuse Response (PAR) program a
- the Supervised Access program which provides family visiting and exchange centres which help keep children connected with their parents

United Way of Halton/Hamilton which supports:

- Individual, Couple and Family counselling programs
- Caring Dads

This year, we would also like to thank the Halton Region Community Investment Fund for their support of our HVPC Sexual Assault Advisory Committee website, the federal government for their business COVID supports, the Gender Based Violence Relief Fund, Women and Gender Equality Canada, the United Way, and our Ministry funders for providing specific COVID-related relief funding and assistance.

We would also like to our many long-standing individual, corporate and service club donors whose contributions were very generous during this time as well as some new donors who provided some generous donations through their recognition of our community needs.

These financial and physical donations provided both practical assistance and much – needed feelings of support and recognition. Please accept our deep gratitude.

