

# Annual Report

2024



Distress Centre Calgary is here for you during life's toughest moments. We provide immediate support to help de-escalate crises and improve your situation, while guiding you toward long-term well-being.

Our services include 24-hour crisis and emotional support, professional counselling, youth peer support, and navigation and information support through 211 and our Coordinated Entry program.







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# LETTER FROM CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters of Distress Centre Calgary,

As I reflect on the past year, I am reminded of the strength and compassion that define our community. 2024 was full of both challenges and growth, and I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support of our volunteers, staff, partners, and donors who make our work possible.

## A YEAR OF CONNECTION AND IMPACT

In 2024, Distress Centre Calgary responded to over 164,000 contacts across our many programs. Behind each call, text, and interaction is a person seeking help, and a compassionate individual ready to listen. These moments of connection form the foundation of everything we do.

Our team has seen firsthand the growing need for mental health and crisis support, suicide intervention, financial assistance, and support in navigating connections to and through the many services and programs in our community. Factors like the rising cost of living, housing insecurity, and ongoing societal stressors have contributed to an increased demand for our services.

In 2024, we made significant progress in advancing our mission to provide crisis and navigation support, strengthening the connections that transform and save lives. We expanded crisis services, marked one year of 9-8-8, enhanced 211's role in emergency response and saw \$653,000 in taxes and benefits reach individuals accessing services at SORCe to address financial stability.

Throughout the year, we responded to thousands of calls, texts, and chats, offering immediate support to individuals facing crisis, trauma, and mental health challenges. By integrating new technologies, we significantly enhanced the accessibility and effectiveness of our services. We reinforced our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility through securing funding for a DEIA Lead to develop a roadmap and framework to drive this work.

Recognizing that crisis affects people in different ways, we also expanded targeted outreach and culturally responsive services to break down barriers and ensure that every individual who reaches out to us feels heard, valued, and supported.

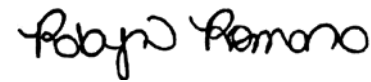
## STRENGTH IN COLLABORATION

No single organization can tackle these challenges alone. Our partnerships with government agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations have strengthened our ability to provide wraparound support for those in need. Together we address complex problems with compassion, empathy, and effectiveness. Our commitment to community service and system leadership — through enhanced knowledge and data sharing — relies on our trusted partners. In 2024 we officially launched the Distress Centre Knowledge Hub in partnership with the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary and secured the technology for the Community Information Exchange with the support of many community partners.

## OUR PEOPLE ARE THE MAGIC

None of this would be possible without our incredible volunteers and staff, whose dedication and compassion remain the heart of our organization. We are profoundly grateful for the countless hours they devote to being a lifeline for those in crisis. We also extend our deepest thanks to our donors, funding partners, and community collaborators — Every interaction, every life impacted, is a direct result of our community coming together to ensure that no one faces crisis alone.

With gratitude,



Robyn Romano

# OUR IMPACT

**We responded to 164,780 contacts in 2024.** Each contact represents a human connecting with another human to find help, hope, and the right next step.

## TOP SERVICE USER ISSUES

- 1 Mental Health
- 2 Interpersonal/Relationships
- 3 Suicide
- 4 Financial/ Economic

## TOP REASONS PEOPLE CONTACTED 211

- 1 Information Services
- 2 Temporary Financial Assistance
- 3 Housing/ Shelter
- 4 Individual and Family Support Services

**50,569**

total crisis contacts including 2,843  
ConnecTeen contacts

**59,183**

total 211 contacts in 2024, including  
8,479 contacts through our call  
diversion work with Calgary  
Police Service and Calgary 911





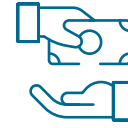
**Our Crisis Services were supported by 302 volunteers** who gave **24,415 hours** of crisis support by phone, chat, and text in 2024.



**Our counselling program responded to 2,420 counselling contacts**, providing professional counselling support to **387 clients**.



In 2024 the Community Information Exchange (CIE) took **one giant leap to becoming a tangible asset to the Calgary community**. The CIE Steering Committee partnered with 211 of Los Angeles County in using the CareSuite platform as the interoperable technology for the CIE.



**The Basic Needs Fund distributed \$322,408 to 296 clients** who needed one-time financial assistance, including support with rental arrears, damage deposits and utility payments.



**The Coordinated Entry Program (CEP) connected over 7,500 individuals** and families to essential supports across housing, financial, health, and justice systems.



CEP conducted **427 housing assessments** and developed housing plans for individuals in health and justice settings, ensuring those hospitalized or incarcerated could transition directly into the CAA Supportive Housing continuum, working to avoid discharge into homelessness.

# OUR STORIES

## 211 RESPONSE TO THE JASPER WILDFIRE

In the aftermath of the wildfire, 211 Alberta played a vital role in a large-scale inter-agency disaster response. For the first time in a provincial response, the team provided both remote and in-person support — first during the evacuation and later on-site in Jasper to assist residents returning home.

The newly formed Community Engagement team quickly sprang into action. Partnering with Community Resource Specialists inside the Canadian Red Cross temporary Welcome Centre, they supported more than 85 returning Jasper residents after the evacuation order was lifted.

Among them were Alex and their young child, Sam (names changed for confidentiality). Upon returning, they were devastated to find that their home had not survived the fire. Seeking emotional support and guidance, they visited the 211 Alberta table at the Welcome Centre. The team provided information on available resources, including childcare options, as Alex would soon need to return to work.

Beyond offering practical support, the Community Engagement & Resource Specialist and Community Resource Specialist took a moment to brighten Sam's day by providing colouring supplies — a small but meaningful source of comfort during an incredibly difficult time.

The team provided information on available resources, including childcare options, as Alex would soon need to return to work.





## THE LAUNCH OF THE DCC KNOWLEDGE HUB

In 2024, Distress Centre Calgary (DCC) and the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work embarked on a groundbreaking initiative to improve crisis intervention for vulnerable communities: the DCC Knowledge Hub (K-Hub) — a three-year research partnership designed to enhance crisis response with evidence-based, cost-effective strategies.

For many, reaching out for help during a crisis can feel overwhelming — especially for marginalized communities such as LGBTQ2S+ individuals, newcomers, racialized groups, and those living in rural areas. These populations often face greater risks of suicidal thoughts and mental health struggles but are less likely to seek support. The DCC K-Hub is working to change that.

By integrating community feedback and data-driven insights, the K-Hub is developing crisis intervention strategies that are person-centred, culturally relevant, and adaptable. The goal is simple yet profound: ensure that everyone in crisis feels heard, valued, and supported.

Backed by a dedicated team of eight research assistants ranging from undergraduate to PhD students, the Faculty of Social Work is diving deep into the complexities of crisis response. Their work will provide nationally shared findings, helping crisis response centres across Canada enhance service delivery and operational efficiency.

The DCC K-Hub is more than just a research initiative — it's a movement towards a more inclusive, responsive, and compassionate crisis support system. Through innovation and collaboration, this partnership is offering a lifeline to those who need it most.

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# OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration and partnerships make for a more connected community. We could not provide Calgary and southern Alberta with compassionate, accessible crisis and navigation support without our valued partners.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Calgary Alpha House Society
- Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
- Calgary Counselling Centre
- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- Calgary Police Service & Calgary 911
- Carya Calgary
- 211 Alberta: Canadian Mental Health Association Edmonton Region and United Way Alberta Capital Region
- Basic Needs Fund Collaborative: CUPS Calgary, Rise Calgary
- BENCH Project: Building Equitable Newcomer Crisis Help: The Immigrant Education Society, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Centre For Newcomers
- Kindred Connections Society
- University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work
- Wood's Homes
- YW Calgary
- Community Corrections – Probation
- The Alex
- CUPS Calgary
- Journey Church
- New Urban Registry
- Trellis Society
- Immigrant Services Calgary
- Calgary Food Bank
- Animal Rescue Foundation
- HomeFront Calgary
- Calgary Legal Guidance
- Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- Government of Alberta Navigation Centre
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Calgary Drop-In Centre

## IN ADDITION TO OUR 24 HOUR CRISIS AND 211 LINES, WE ALSO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

- 988 Suicide Crisis Helpline
- SeniorConnect – Calgary Senior's Resource Society
- 403-SENIORS – The Way In Network
- Bullying Helpline
- Family Violence Information Line
- Abuse Helpline
- Calgary And Area Child And Family Services Authority – Child Intervention Intake And Response Team (CIIRT)

## SORCE CALGARY:

Our Coordinated Entry Program works out of the location of SORCe. SORCe is a multi-agency collaborative that connects people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to programs and services that can help to address the barriers to stable housing

## OUR DONORS AND FUNDERS

The support of funders and donors makes it possible for us to offer our programs and services at no cost to the people who need them.

### IMPACT FUNDERS

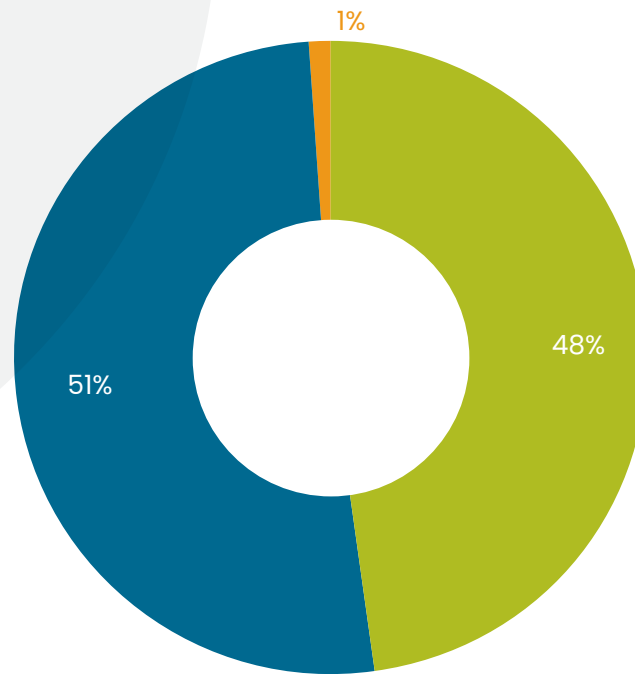


### MAJOR DONORS:

- Alberta Law Foundation
- ATB Financial
- Calgary Flames Foundation
- Cenovus Energy Community Emergency Fund
- Dollar A Day Foundation
- ENMAX Corporation
- Frank J. Flaman Foundation
- Gary & Janeen Nissen
- Government of Canada
- iA Financial Group - Industrial Alliance
- John Kousinioris
- Nickle Family Foundation
- Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP
- POD Marketing Inc.
- RBC Foundation
- Rogers Charity Classic
- Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown
- The Lecky Foundation
- The Tenaquip Foundation
- W. Brett Wilson Family Fund for Adolescent Wellness
- Ward Tirecraft Group
- Wascana Energy 2001 Ltd.
- William S. Herron Family Charitable Foundation

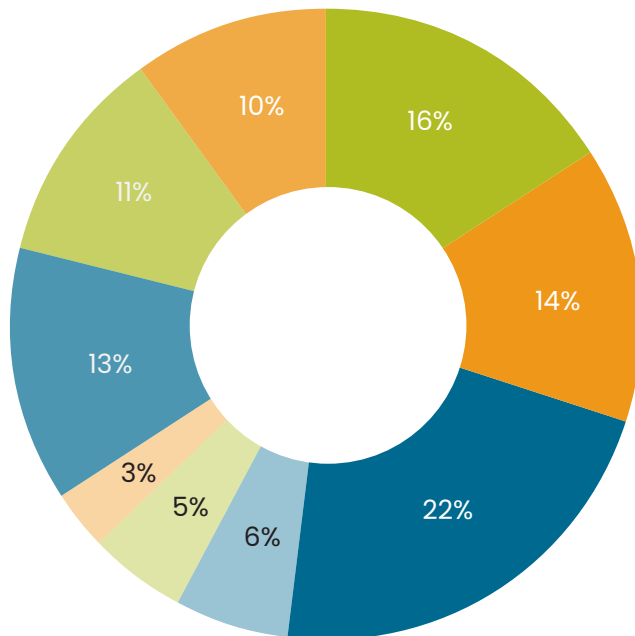
# FINANCIALS

Being a trusted charity starts with transparency.



2024 \$14.2 MILLION  
OPERATING FUNDING SOURCES

- Government Grants
- Community Support
- Interest and Other



2024 SPENDING ALLOCATION BY PROGRAM

- Crisis
- 988 Suicide Crisis Helpline
- 211
- Community Information Exchange
- Counselling
- Basic Needs Fund
- Coordinated Entry
- 911/211 Call Diversion
- Administration

[See our Full Audited Financial Statements →](#)



# LOOKING FORWARD

The need for connection and support has never been greater, and as we look to 2025, Distress Centre Calgary is ready to meet that need by listening deeply, learning continuously, and leading with compassion.

The world around us is changing and so are the needs of our community. Growing mental health concerns, the rising cost of living, housing instability, and increasingly complex crises require bold action, innovative solutions, a commitment to equity and deeper collaboration.

As we look ahead, our focus is clear: to keep strengthening the heart of Distress Centre — crisis and navigation support — while expanding and evolving to meet the changing needs of the people we serve.





# IN THE YEAR AHEAD, WE WILL:

1

**Deepen our core crisis and navigation work:** — continuously adapting to meet emerging needs while staying grounded in the values and services that have been our foundation for over 50 years.

2

**Enhance crisis service delivery** through the Distress Centre Calgary Knowledge Hub, in partnership with the University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work: advancing training, measuring impact, and supporting our volunteers and staff in delivering exceptional care.

3

**Build and operationalize the Community Information Exchange:** leveraging technology to improve systems navigation, strengthen information sharing, and foster deeper coordination across community partners.

4

**Advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility:** implementing our DEIA strategy to ensure everyone who reaches out to us feels seen, heard, and supported.

5

**Partner with Indigenous organizations, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers:** as we begin developing an Indigenous Strategy grounded in respect, relationship, and reconciliation.

6

**Launch our next Strategic Plan:** a bold roadmap to guide our work for the next five years, rooted in community, connection, and collaboration.

## WE KNOW THE ROAD AHEAD WON'T BE EASY. BUT WE ALSO KNOW WE DON'T WALK IT ALONE.

It is with deep gratitude, for our volunteers, staff, partners, donors, and especially those who trust us in their most vulnerable moments, that we move forward together.

Together, we will continue to meet people where they are, offer hope in moments of crisis, and build stronger connections that change lives.

Thank you for continuing to be part of this journey.

*With gratitude,*  
Robyn Romano  
CEO





**DISTRESS CENTRE**  
24 HOUR SUPPORT | COUNSELLING | RESOURCES

[distresscentre.com](https://distresscentre.com)

