

Bringing Change to Life



Annual Report 2020 - 2021





In 2020-2021, Willowbridge Community Services faced a year of massive challenges, change, and uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic isolated many within our communities and resulted in widespread anxiety and distress.

We take this opportunity to look back on our past to trace how our agency rose to these challenges. The way Willowbridge responded to a pandemic before offers us lessons for today.

The small community of Brantford/Brant had a population of only 25,000 people when the Spanish Flu struck in 1918. Over 400 residents lost their lives in less than 5 years, and the fear, anxiety, and loss left many in the community struggling. Our fledgling charity, then named the Social Service League of Brantford, rose to the occasion and changed the way it delivered services. First, it turned its attention to victims of the Flu and raised funds for their families. It offered 3-year loans to widows and their children and opened several *Creches* (day-cares) throughout the

city. The League's "Well Baby Clinics" were also expanded, and education, support, and advocacy were provided to new mothers.

When we study this history, we can see the same tools needed to respond to our present pandemic mirrored in our past. Adaptability, compassion, responsiveness, and support for marginalized communities allowed us to reimagine our services this year. We are proud to continue the Social Service League's story, and to lead an agency with a history of such profound community support.

Over the course of this pandemic, we have been intensely moved and inspired by our community partners, neighbours and staff. Like our colleagues a century ago, we continue to be kind, to celebrate one another, and find new and creative ways

to bring change to lives. We are humbled to witness our shared principles and our trust in the power of community, relationship, and connection.

Thank you to all our staff and board for demonstrating the same compassion today that we have offered throughout history. By looking to the past, we are reminded that there are better times ahead. Willowbridge will continue to meet the ever-changing needs of our community.

Regards,

Andrew Oldroyd
Board President

Leslie Josling,
MSc, G. Dipl, RSW
Executive Director

Bringing Change to Life:

Our Priorities for 2019 – 2021

1
Welcoming
Premises

2
Accessibility &
Responsiveness

3
Innovation &
Excellence

4
Employer of
Choice

5
Financial
Sustainability
& Growth

Our strategic priorities reflect our vision of empowered individuals, strong families, and a more vibrant community.

We invite you to examine our top strategic priorities for the coming years and learn more about where we aim to be as an organization.

To find out more about our strategic priorities, read our whole plan [here](#).



2020-2021 Board of Directors

(As of March 31, 2021)

Andrew Oldroyd - President

Jamie Savage - Vice President

Sherry Paling - Treasurer

Wendy Easveld - Secretary

Anna Maria Petitti

Malcolm MacFarlane

Carley Gallant Jenkins

Neha Gutkar

A New Community Hub:

Partnering for a Stronger Community

Over the course of the past year, Willowbridge has been working with ten community partners to explore the feasibility of constructing a Community Hub in which to co-locate our services. We are excited to announce that due to funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and incredible community support, we have moved even closer to our dream of creating an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming space for social services in our region.

This year, together with our partners, we spoke with participants, staff and marginalized communities to understand what we can do to have our space reflect our community's needs. Next, we will work with consultants in governance, legal, communications, social finance, development, engineering, planning, and architecture to bring this vision to life. We project that the building will be

roughly 175,000 square feet, and include elements such as community gardens, bookable meeting and activity spaces, public workshare and hotelling spaces, conference facilities, public laundry, bikeshare programs, and fully accessible programming spaces.

We hope you will join us in celebrating our incredible consultants and supporters for their generosity, expertise, and deep commitment to community.

(Right) Renderings from +VG Architects



A Year in Review

2020-2021 was a challenging year for the community and for all of us at Willowbridge. Living through a pandemic put a lot of pressure on our relationships, finances, and mental health. Many of us experienced loss and isolation. Our agency was proud to serve over 2779 individuals through Financial Empowerment, Developmental Services, and Counselling.

To help keep our community safe, many of our supports became virtual this year. However, we understood that not everyone has access to the resources required for virtual supports. While social distancing, we adapted and showed up for community members any way we could. This included porch drop-offs for essential goods and services, foodbank deliveries, and organizing cell phones and Internet service for some clients.

This year, we successfully renewed our accreditation with the Canadian Centre for Accreditation and were proud to attain

accreditation in their new 'Aboriginal Standards'. We continued our work in recognizing and challenging privilege and oppression. We participated in Safer Spaces and Anti-Oppressive Practice trainings, created a new book club featuring Indigenous authors, and looked at our policies to ensure the use safe language. With the community and its diversity in mind, our agency began a redesign project and we are working towards reimagining our services in collaboration with the community.

Community members served: 2,779

Pivot Behaviour Supports: 487

EnCompass Service Coordination: 301

Transitional Aged Youth: 28

Counselling: 1,114

Routes Respite Community: 62

Financial Empowerment: 787



Staying Connected



(Above) Thyme to Cook
(Below) Stay at Home Kits

This year, Willowbridge understood that community connection and friendships were difficult to maintain as we faced the challenges of stay-at-home orders. For those enrolled in our services, our various departments worked together to initiate virtual groups that support belonging, wellbeing, and social recreation!

Some of our exciting new groups included Creative Calm, Thyme to Cook, and Fun with Photography. We held virtual events for Brant Mental Health Week, Pride Month, and the holidays to keep everyone engaged all year round. Using the virtual groups model, Routes Respite Community was also able to offer supported virtual social recreation opportunities like book club, game nights, arts and crafts, and Zumba! These virtual groups were even offered to clients on our waitlist.

We have really enjoyed expanding our virtual groups and believe that offering these services makes Willowbridge more accessible. We are looking forward to continuing to build our virtual programming and supporting the community to connect in safe and positive ways.



St Patrick's Day Party



Developmental Services Clinician

A New Way to Support Our Community

Willowbridge is proud to announce that in 2020, we introduced a new role to our agency. The Developmental Services (DS) Clinician is a new counselling support that we are offering to our participants living with developmental disabilities, their families, and their caregivers. The DS Clinician works in tandem with our Respite Community, EnCompass Service Coordinators, Counseling team, and Pivot Behaviour Supports.

The concept is simple. Every one of us needs support with our relationships and mental health from time-to-time. For people living with developmental disability, we recognize that trauma, abuse, and discrimination are experienced at staggering levels and this takes a toll on individual mental health as well as the mental health of those that support them. To improve quality of life, build trusting relationships, and enhance the work we do in our programs, we are now offering counselling support for relationships, mental health, and behavioural concerns within family and caregiver systems.

We believe that counselling individuals living with developmental disabilities will help us to create a stronger, more resilient community. We seek to address the root traumas and concerns of our participants and support them in their process toward healing.

“

“I’ve learned that mental health issues often go hand in hand with financial and housing problems and require just as much if not more support.”

- Caregiver

”



**Valentin Angardi,
MA, RP, AMFT,
Developmental
Services Clinician**

EnCompass Service Coordination

Navigating and accessing complex community and social services can be overwhelming. Our Service Coordinators offer individuals living with an developmental disability the support they need to access safe housing, medical, financial, or mental health services and to develop socially valued roles within their community.



This year, our Ongoing and Enhanced Service Coordinators were faced with the challenge of coordinating services in the midst of a pandemic. Not only did community members need to learn how to navigate closures, service interruptions, and health risks, but many were faced with social isolation, financial insecurity, and rapidly changing restrictions.

The EnCompass teams at Willowbridge responded to extraordinary circumstances by being extra extraordinary, supporting over 300 community members with elevated





levels of distress in 2020-2021. Working together with our new Developmental Services Clinician, they not only provided daily support to those in the community, but also expanded their impact by offering counselling and therapeutic support to individuals, families, and caregivers in developmental services.

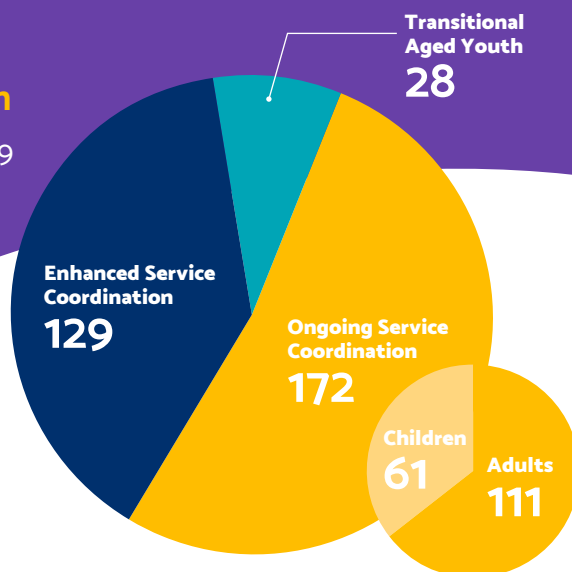
Our teams offered many additional supports for COVID-19, preparing and distributing over 70 "Stay at Home Kits". These kits offered information on how to stay safe during the pandemic, listed community resources, and

included activities to do at home. We began coordinating food-bank deliveries, supported at-risk individuals with their grocery shopping, and provided education to support individuals in using virtual platforms.

The EnCompass teams also supported our community in identifying COVID-19 symptoms, as well as booking and attending testing. We assisted individuals with local health unit directions, identified community resources to support them through quarantine, and coordinated access to vaccines.

EnCompass Service Coordination

Total Served: 329



Transitional Aged Youth

For youth living with an developmental disability in the Hamilton area, our Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) planner provides support and opportunity during the transition into adulthood. We work collaboratively with child and adult community services, as well as Children's Aid Societies. Together, we create thoughtful plans that ensure smooth service transitions and support youth as they make their journey into adulthood.

This year, our TAY program served 28 youths. Like all programs, TAY faced COVID-19 related challenges. Public health restrictions and interruptions to service caused many transition plans to be put on hold. Our TAY planner provided extensive advocacy and creativity to ensure our youths' current supports were maintained and extended in these situations.

As restrictions lifted, planning has resumed. We are excited to support individuals on their road to independence once again!

Pivot Behaviour Supports

At times, people with a developmental disability may express their unmet needs through behaviour that confuses or concerns others. Pivot Behaviour Supports offers behaviour consultation, short-term clinics, training opportunities, and various groups to help individuals learn new skills, assist caregivers in understanding unmet needs, and to develop effective interventions in the home and community.

2020-2021 was a year of success and innovation for our Pivot Program! For the first time in many years, we are fully staffed and have added four new Behaviour Consultants to the team. We welcome our new additions!

To keep the community safe during COVID-19, the Pivot Team made a shift to virtual programming, working with individuals to develop the skills and tools needed to access online platforms.

Our Pivot team also launched some exciting new services last year. In 2020, we began delivering a Teleclinic that provides short term, timely service for individuals with immediate behaviour support needs. Additionally, we began working with the team at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton to provide behavioural support to the mental health team at the Charlton Campus. Our staff are embedded in the unit and are working to support an intense community need.

Last, but not least, our Pivot team also began working with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board to support individuals in the transition years between school and work. We are proud to support youth as they work to build their futures!

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Trying times call for a community of folks to step into challenging situations and hold each other up. Although our challenges may continue, we are better prepared, well supported, and comfortable knowing that we can count on your group to offer support everywhere that you can.

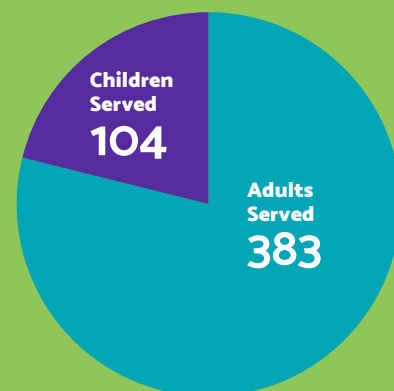
- Pivot caregiver

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Pivot Behaviour Supports

Total Served: 487



Counselling

At times, we all encounter situations that are hard to face alone. During those times, counselling can make a difference. Willowbridge offers confidential counselling and psychotherapy to individuals, couples, and families to explore the strengths and resources they can use to overcome the challenges they are facing.

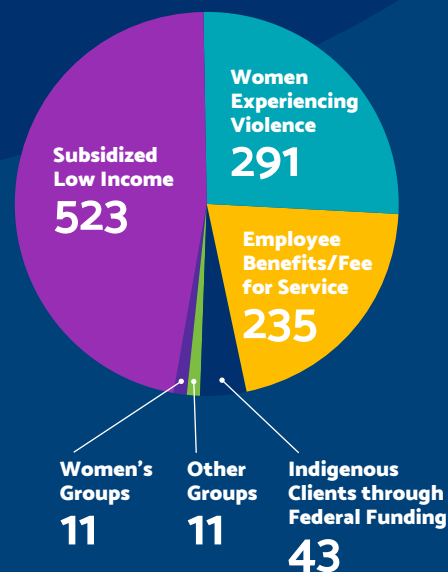
The anxiety, social isolation, and insecurity our community experienced because of COVID-19 increased the demand for our mental health services at Willowbridge. Although challenged by lockdown restrictions, our Counselling team served over 1114 community members through online, video, and telephone counselling. We plan to explore opportunities to continue with virtual counselling options once our agency has safely returned to in-person service!

This year, our Counselling team was pleased to welcome Laura Bergeron to the team. Newly recognized as our Director of Services, Laura is offering supervision, support, and strategic direction to our Counselling team as she has done for our Developmental Services for many years. We believe that having a single Director of Services will help Willowbridge move closer to our goal of offering wrap-around, multi-disciplinary support to individuals and families.

This year, our Counselling department received new, temporary funding to provide counselling services to individuals living with intellectual disabilities, as well as counselling to families supported by Brant Family and Children's services. We have welcomed three new counsellors to the team in order to serve these contracts and to support individuals and families as they respond to the challenges of the pandemic.

Counselling

Total Served: 1,114



Routes Respite Community

In our respite programs, everyone belongs. We offer daily support to individuals living with an developmental disability in Brantford and Brant County as they make new connections, head out into the community, and give back in ways that hold meaning.

Routes Respite Community is a program based on community participation, volunteerism, and friendships. For this reason, COVID-19 created challenges for our community members, as rolling lockdowns, social distancing, and the elevated risk factors for medically vulnerable clients meant we had to be ready to adapt.

In April 2020, we quickly ceased all in-person programming and supports for our respite community in response to the 'stay at home order'. However, we knew that the connections and friendships our community members built were essential to well-being. By shifting to online supports, Routes Respite Community was able to serve 62 individuals through our adult respite and Passports programs!

Respite Community Groups

Routes Respite Community quickly adapted to a virtual format last spring, and our support staff came up with fun and educational options for online programming. We created groups such as music therapy, Zumba (taught by a participant), craft days, board game hours, holiday celebrations, and book clubs. To make sure the whole respite community could access our supports, the Respite team also created smaller groups to provide literacy and IT support. Our virtual groups have been so successful that we will continue to offer them to our Routes Respite Community and others across the agency after we have fully returned to in-person services!

Routes Respite Community

Total Served:

62



Together during COVID-19



Financial Empowerment Services

At any income level, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by your finances. The Financial Empowerment team at Willowbridge supports individuals and families to find solutions and plan for the future.

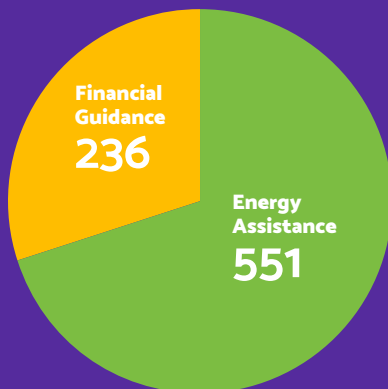
In 2020-2021, our accredited Credit Counsellor offered support to over 787 community members. People have been experiencing high levels of financial stress as a result of the pandemic. Our Financial Empowerment program provided financial literacy education in budgeting, credit ratings, financial planning, and managing debt to low-income community members. We also provided virtual educational workshops for community members in need.

Throughout the pandemic we supported individuals and families with their household energy costs through the Low-Income Energy Assistance Programs. Our switch to virtual services helped us remain connected to lessen the burden of poverty and ensure that critical services remain accessible.



Financial Empowerment

Total Served: 787





Together we can make a difference...

Willowbridge Community Services is a charitable not-for-profit organization. We provide counselling, financial empowerment, and developmental services to those in our community. No one is ever turned away based on ability to pay.

Our deepest thanks to all the generous donors and funders of our 2020-2021 programs and services. We were able to create new programs, support our existing ones, and reach out to those who need it most as a result of your giving.

For over 100 years, Willowbridge Community Services has been supporting our community. We ask for your help to keep our programs and services accessible to individuals and families in their moment of need. With donations, grants and funding from generous individuals and organizations, we will continue to make our community a better place.

[Donate Online at Canada Helps](#)



A special thanks to the individual donors who also contributed to making our work possible this year.



The John A. Sanderson & Family Trust

Staff List

As of March 31, 2021

Counseling Services

Taye Adeniyi
Lori Hensen
Shelley Jonathan
Melissa Malcolm
Paul Polito
Joanne MacNeil

Developmental Services Clinician

Valentin Angardi
Hailey Persall – Student

Financial Empowerment

Sue Davey

Pivot Behavior Supports

Margaret Elson – Interim Manager
Tricia Kidd (incl. Leadership Development)
Christine Blocki
Kristin Campbell Scardellato
Corene Jonat
Jo-Anne Kens
Carmen McCauley
Mary Mullen
Meagan Nightingale
Sarah Smith
Meredith Tater
Catjiana Weld
Michelle Wiersma (maternity leave)
Alisa Gagne (maternity leave)

EnCompass Service Coordination

Edie Mous – Manager

Ongoing Service Coordination

Jean-Jacques Carr
Joanna Pugsley
Laurie Redpath-Rolfe
Jackie Thompson
Joanne Towers

Enhanced Service Coordination

Lyndsey Dickson
Amanda Downs
Jim Kennedy
Heather Mordue
Kathryn Newhouse

Transitional Aged Youth

Lindsay Dickson

Routes Respite Community

Jenny Poplar – Manager
Shanah Hayes
Brenda Hockin
Allan Murray
Marilyn Ward

Administration & IT

Sarah Hammond
Sandra Kennedy
Melissa Kuzler
Dennis Saunders

Leadership Team

Leslie Josling
Executive Director

Laura Bergeron
Director of Services

Eranga Peduruarachchige
Director of Human Resources

Devon Atherton
Communications & Project Manager

Financial Report

April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021

Revenue

Brant United Way	\$112,580
Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Service	\$2,960,136
Bethesda Services	\$80,000
Donations/Other Revenues	\$159,329
Fees for Service	\$97,986
Other Government Grants	\$24,201
Passport Revenues	\$103,770

Total	\$3,538,002
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Expenditures

Salaries and Benefits	\$2,485,062
Non-Salaried Expenses	\$666,262
Centrally Allocated Administration	\$389,440

Total	\$3,540,764
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Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenditures	(\$2,762)
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The Willowbridge Audited Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2021, prepared by Millards, Chartered Accountants, are available at 54 Brant Ave, Brantford, Ontario N3G 3G8.

Our Programs and Services

Counselling Services

- Family and Children
- Couples
- Groups
- Individuals
- 2SLGBTQ+
- Indigenous
- Multicultural
- Men's Specific
- Women's Specific

Financial Empowerment Programs

- Financial Guidance
- Household Energy Assistance
 - OESP (Energy Bill Assistance)
 - LEAP (Gas Bill Assistance)
- Workshops and seminars

Developmental Services

- **Pivot Behaviour Supports**
 - Behaviour Consultations
 - Pivot Clinic
- **EnCompass Service Coordination**
 - EnCompass Children
 - Ongoing Service Coordination
 - Transitional Aged Youth
 - EnCompass Adults
 - Ongoing Service Coordination
 - Enhanced Service Coordination
- **Respite**
 - Routes Respite Community
 - The Grove
 - Passports
 - Catkins Kids Camps
- **Developmental Services' Clinician**

Groups

- Leadership Development Course
- Women Initiating New Growth and Self Esteem (WINGS)
- Soaring Above the Turbulence
- Flying Together in Healthy Relationships
- Zones of Regulation
- Nurturing Self Compassion
- Skills for Healthy Living
- Social Recreation Groups

Our Mission

To promote the well being and social inclusion of individuals and families through counselling, support, education and advocacy.

Our Vision

Empowered Individuals. Stronger Families.
A More Vibrant Community.



willowbridge.ca

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