

Bringing change to life



A Message from Our Leadership

2021-2022 was a year of creativity and imagination at Willowbridge. Together with our service participants, we initiated the project, Service Reimagined, and took a deep-dive into our programs, facility, and the community.

We engaged hundreds of community members in a co-design project that looked at how participants experience our services; worked together to redesign the way we do business; introduced new initiatives; and continued our progress toward the creation of a new Community Hub in Brantford. Everywhere we turned we had opportunities to collaborate with people imagining better ways to serve, enjoy, and grow our community – even in the midst of an ongoing pandemic.

The Service Reimagined co-design project reaffirmed our commitment to treat every person as the expert on their own lives. We saw that our community is strong, knowledgeable, and passionate about creating change. We were privileged to act as a vehicle for change and to support the diverse needs of our community in 2021-2022.

Last year, Willowbridge also developed a new strategic plan to guide us through the coming years. This plan will continue to hold community voices at the forefront, and to ensure that services and spaces created *for you* are developed *with you*.

Our deepest gratitude to our community, partners, and dedicated staff for their courage and creativity. We are humbled and inspired by the opportunity to lead this agency.

Warmly,



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Savage'.

Jamie Savage
Board President



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Leslie Josling'.

Leslie Josling
Executive Director



Bringing Change to Life

Our Strategic Priorities 2022-2025

As a result of in-depth community consultation and co-design projects this year, Willowbridge has refocused and developed a new strategic plan, mission, vision, and values. We are pleased to present our strategic priorities for 2022-2025



1 A Welcoming Environment



2 Accessibility and Diversity



3 Innovation and Excellence in Service



4 Financial Sustainability and Growth



5 Employer of Choice

Our strategic priorities reflect our new vision of “a community where everyone leads their best life.”

We invite you to examine our strategic priorities and learn more about our goals in our 2022-2025 strategic plan. Click [here](#) to access it, or go to willowbridge.ca/about/resources/reports/



2021-2022

Board of Directors

Jamie Savage – President

Wendy Easveld – Vice President

Sherry Paling – Treasurer

Carley Gallant Jenkins – Secretary

Anna Maria Petitti

Malcolm MacFarlane

Neha Gutkar

Luke Biscoe

Aliya Aneja

Kathy Reston

A Year in Review

Willowbridge had an eventful and at times challenging 2021-2022. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact service delivery and community wellbeing for many we serve. Despite this, **Willowbridge provided service to over 2096 community members** this year.

Service Reimagined

In 2021, People Minded Business (PMB) came onboard to facilitate a year-long co-design project that brought staff, participants, families, and community members together to rethink the way Willowbridge does business. Over 68 stakeholders provided insight into their experience with our organization, and a working group made up of participants, community partners and Willowbridge staff was formed. Feedback highlighted areas in our services with room for positive change, particularly during “intake” and “discharge”.

The working group got to work. They met with PMB for 15 morning sessions and engaged in creative thinking activities that resulted in 27 unique action items to address the community’s concerns. Their collaborative ideas for improving support included terminology improvements, physical space updates, and person-directed supports.

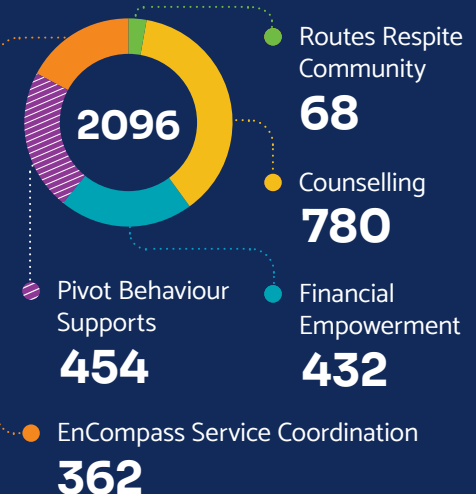
A sample of action items include:

- Rethinking how we conduct “Intake” to ensure it is experienced as a “Warm Welcome”
- Rethinking “Discharge” to ensure it is experienced as a “Good Goodbye”
- Brief Service Facilitation, which includes “Walk In” and “Walk Out” supports for new participants that help them find immediate solutions and navigate the service system
- Creating an accessible, interdisciplinary team that offers participants access to the services offered across the organization
- Creating an ‘Introducing Willowbridge’ video involving people supported by Willowbridge
- Introducing regular fireside chats

The ideas established by this working group are already informing our services. We are excited about the upcoming changes to our services informed by this project, which include reducing our service silos, making services easier to navigate, and making our programs and spaces more welcoming to those we serve. We will continue empowering participants and community to co-design services with us.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED:



A Year in Review

Brief Service Facilitator

The Service Reimagined project empowered our service users to explore and develop new ways for Willowbridge to provide service that ensure people feel welcomed as an important part of the Willowbridge community. One suggestion was to offer those awaiting service immediate, short term assistance to generate solutions and to support access to the best combination of services available at Willowbridge and in the community. A Brief Service Facilitator was introduced in spring of 2022. The Facilitator now offers a warm welcome and support to individuals and families waiting for service across all programs.



Developmental Services Counselling

Our new counselling program for adults living with developmental disabilities took off last year! Over 58 people with developmental disabilities continued to thrive, find their voices, and feel empowered through our counselling services in 2021-2022. This service was also expanded to support caregivers and families. We initiated a Caregiver Support Group, where parents and caregivers can access a safe space to share their challenges and triumphs, explore their resources, experience community support, and problem solve together.



Virtual Groups

Our community told us that they wanted more opportunities to stay connected and get creative in 2021-2022. In response, we held 24 ongoing virtual groups and workshops for over 79 individuals receiving service at Willowbridge. We even opened our groups to the community during Mental Health Week! Groups included crowd favourites such as Creative Calm, Thyme to Cook, Book Club, and Zumba.



The Riverside Hub

Partnering for a stronger community

Over the course of the past year, Willowbridge has continued 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 this year we moved even closer to our dream of creating an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming space for health and social services in our region.

In June 2021, the hub partnership received an Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant that allowed us to develop a fundraising plan, governance model and corporate structure, a new brand, and to explore possible roles for social finance in the hub. Simultaneous to this work, the hub partners have been searching for a feasible site for construction and building a case for infrastructure funding.



Willowbridge, on behalf of the hub, has engaged hundreds of community members, stakeholders, consultants, and members of federal, provincial, and municipal government to further the project's objectives. In spring of 2022, the City of Brantford unanimously voted in favour of supporting the hub to conduct a feasibility study into a site on Icomm Drive in Brantford's downtown core. Our engineers from MTE consulting, along with our architects from the Ventin Group and Two Row Architect, are working with us to study the site and put together a design proposal.

The hub partnership has also been successful in securing a second Ontario Trillium Foundation grant that will fund an in-depth community engagement campaign to bring the public alongside the project, develop a business plan, and complete shovel-ready architectural designs. All of these elements will come together and be used to apply for federal and provincial infrastructure funding in the future.



Pivot Behaviour Supports

The turning point for change

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.

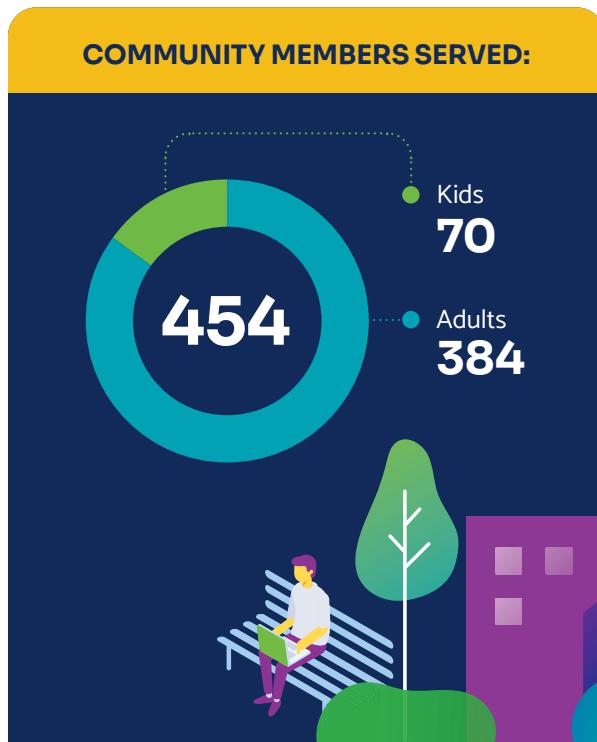
2021-2022 was an exciting year for the Pivot Team! Our behaviour consultants saw 432 community members and delivered workshops across the community. The incredible staff on this team went above and beyond for our community, offering in-person and virtual services in a constantly shifting landscape.

The Pivot team launched two exciting new initiatives to support our community partners. The Pivot Clinic opened, which is a new monthly walk-in program for individuals and their support staff. In the Pivot Clinic, participants and community partners work together with our consultants on-site to address the challenges they are facing. So far, it has been a huge success! We also established a Behaviour Support Plan Review Committee that was developed to help agencies support individual needs while also adhering to Ministry guidelines.

We are also excited to announce expanded collaboration with St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. We now offer embedded supports to the Charlton & West 5th Campus, including large-scale trainings for over 200 front-line health workers. Last year, we continued our success with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board as well, supporting youth living with developmental disabilities in their path to employment through Project Search.

“Within a short period of time, the [Pivot Team] were able to give us pointers that will enhance our Behaviour Support Plans to provide the best quality of life for the people we support”

PIVOT CAREGIVER



EnCompass Service Coordination

Navigating a complex environment

Navigating and accessing complex community and social services can be overwhelming when you're in need. Our Service Coordinators offer individuals living with a 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.

Enhanced Service Coordination

Enhanced Service Coordination (ESC) is designed to provide short-term, intensive support to adults 18+ with a developmental disability and dual diagnosis, serious medical condition, and experiencing complex trauma that requires more individualized and concentrated support. We ensure that individuals receive the help they need to stabilize critical situations and find support within the community.

This year our ESC team served 116 adults using a hybrid model of support; getting out into the community to meet service participants face-to-face when safe, but also offering a range of social media, telephone, and video services. This approach was so successful that the team will continue to be flexible and provide service in the most accessible way possible for every client into the future!

Housing has been the greatest challenge for those supported by ESC this year. Often, those we support experience poverty and have few sources of income. This has been a challenge as the cost of living continues to increase and the housing market remains highly competitive. Our team has been working closely with organizations and partners across the region to advocate for affordable and accessible housing.



“My son’s Service Coordinator is the best we’ve ever had. You can tell that the Behaviour Consultant they involved really cares about the people she helps, too.”

ENCOMPASS CAREGIVER

Ongoing Service Coordination

Ongoing Service Coordination (OSC) is designed to provide long-term support to adults 18+ living with a developmental disability in the city of Brantford and Brant County. Our program captures all aspects of advocacy, skill-building, goal setting, community participation and service coordination for individuals seeking to live more independent lives.

The OSC team provided ongoing service for 179 adults and 27 children in 2021-2022 and were pleased to welcome three new service coordinators on board!

This year had some unique challenges for OSC resulting from the pandemic. A reduction in available community services and supports during lock-down, coupled with some of the complex medical needs of our clients, resulted in a critical need for urgent service coordination and a growing waitlist. Our OSC team rose to the challenge and helped to create Brief Service Facilitation – a new, short-term program for individuals on the wait-list in need of urgent interdisciplinary support. Typically, urgent needs surrounded access to ODSP benefits, passports funding and planning, medical support and access to counselling.

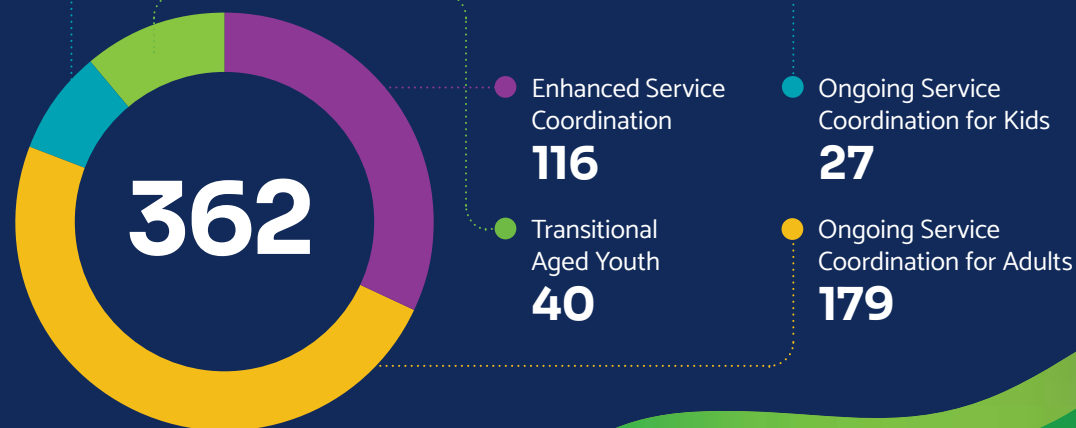


Transitional Aged Youth

For youth living with a 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 the Hamilton and Catholic Children's Aid Societies advocating for the support needs of youth with adult service providers, to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood.

In 2021-2022, our Transitional Aged Youth Planner assisted 40 youths as they began to make the transition from youth services to adult services. The pandemic created a unique challenge for youths living with a developmental disability because so many of the services they required were not available during the pandemic. This limited the ability to plan for the transition. However, our Youth Planner came through and successfully supported families and individuals as they made plans for their futures.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED:



Routes Respite Community

Community, Friendships, and Belonging

In our respite programs, everyone belongs. We offer daily support to individuals living with a 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.

Daytime Community

The Routes Daytime Community is an on-site service that supports adults living with developmental disabilities as they participate in community programming, skill building, and Willowbridge activities.

Our daytime community programming served 28 adults in 2021-2022. Social distancing and restrictions on gathering made it difficult to offer programming as usual. However, thanks to the patience of our community members and the flexibility of our staff, the daytime respite community offered a mix of in-person and online supports to help bring families through the year. We have successfully reopened our on-site programming, and we are looking forward to welcoming back even more community members as we open further!



Passport Services

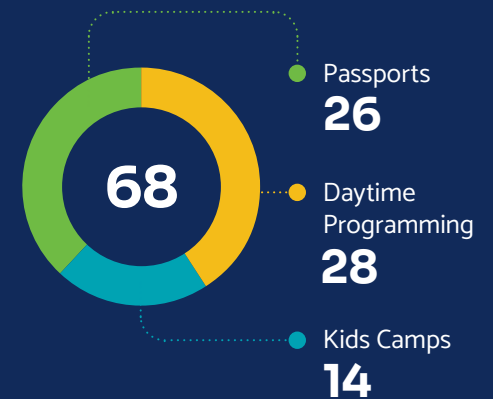
Passport is a provincial program that administers funding to adults over 18 and living with a developmental disability to help them participate in their communities. Our staff work with adults one-on-one to help develop an individualized program that focuses on community engagement and personal interests.

In 2021-2022, our Passport Program offered virtual and in-person supports to over 26 people. Early in the year, the program was effectively closed due to pandemic restrictions. However, Passports Ontario temporarily expanded the list of eligible expenses, which allowed individuals to use their funding for activities and supplies that made it easier to stay home. We delivered fun stay-at-home kits and virtual groups to make sure everyone continued to have access to community and friends.

In September 2021 the Passport Program slowly began to reopen for one-on-one in-person supports, and our community members are now able to get back out and build connections and skills safely.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED:





Camps for Youth & Kids

Willowbridge offers supported March Break Camps and four-week summer camps for children and youth under 18 and living with a developmental disability.

Due to the pandemic, our March Break Camps were cancelled in 2021. However, last summer we ran virtual summer camps that had everyone excited! Our virtual campers did fun science labs and created slime, made music and crafts, played board games online, and even did a virtual escape room! While that was loads of fun, we're still looking forward to welcoming back our campers in-person soon.



The virtual groups were a god send for our daughter! They kept her connected with her friends, and the activities kept her engaged during the pandemic.

PARENT OF ROUTES PARTICIPANT

The Grove Afternoon Youth Community

For those with loved ones in school or day supports, there is often a gap between day program ending and the end of the caregiver's workday, making it tough to plan schedules. The Grove is an afternoon respite community designed for youth ages 15-29 and living with an intellectual disability.

The Grove afternoon community for youth has been closed since 2019 as a result of the pandemic. We are looking forward to welcoming our community back in 2022/2023!



Virtual Groups

In January 2021, our Respite Community began offering virtual groups to the individuals supported by the respite program, keeping everyone connected and reducing the burden of social isolation for all. The virtual groups have been incredibly successful, with sessions running 5-days-per-week until July 2021! We continue to offer virtual groups and have a variety of options that include programming like music therapy, board game days, karaoke, trivia, meditation, and book club.

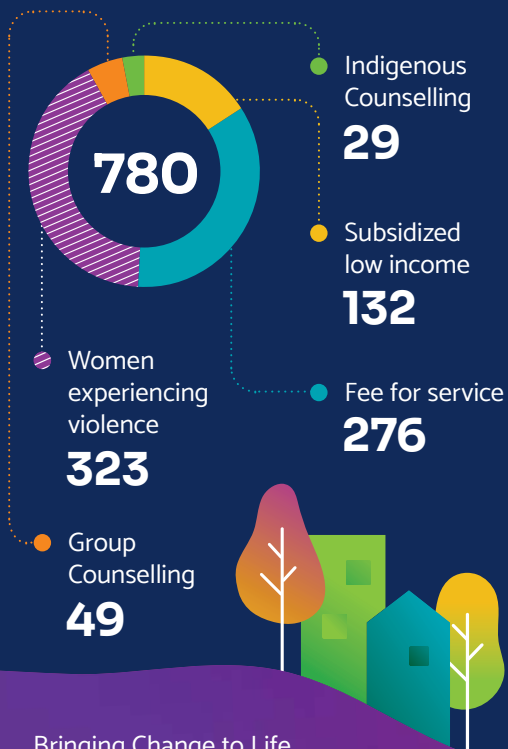


Counselling

If you're ready to talk, we're here to listen

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.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED:



Last year was a year of challenges, change, and excitement for counselling at Willowbridge. In 2021-2022, Willowbridge's counselling department served 780 community members. We also introduced a new program manager, Vicki Hartman, who came to us with many years of experience across multiple sectors, including children's mental health, developmental services, and trauma and attachment. Welcome, Vicki!

Unfortunately, we faced our fair share of challenges too. Willowbridge has lost significant annualized funding for subsidized counselling. This has reduced our capacity to serve the community, and, with the increase in depression, anxiety, and social isolation throughout the pandemic, has come at a time characterized with an unprecedented increase in demand for our services. As a result, our waitlist has grown significantly.

With that in mind, our team sought temporary funding to help bridge the gap. We are pleased to announce that we were successful in securing two subsidized counselling grants from the Canadian Women's Foundation, and a short-term relationship counselling grant from Brant United Way. We have also made our options for virtual, in-person, and hybrid model counselling permanent to provide greater accessibility to our services for everyone in the community.

To add to our accessibility, we also implemented an online booking platform called Caredove, that allowed individuals to book their own intake appointments online. This service launched in February 2022, and in our first month we received 19 booked appointments!



Financial Empowerment

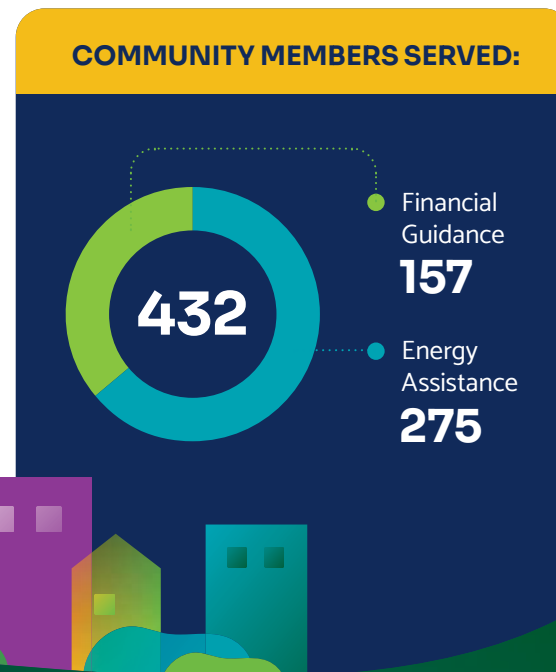
Program Closure

For over 40 years, the Financial Empowerment team at Willowbridge supported individuals and families to find solutions and plan for the future. It was with great sadness that as of December 23, 2021, Willowbridge's Board of Directors decided to close the service due to a loss in funding.

Our Financial Empowerment program has been a long-standing service in the Brant community. In 2021, our accredited Credit Counsellor offered educational support to over 432 community members. Our Financial Empowerment program provided financial guidance in budgeting, credit ratings, financial planning, and managing debt to low-income community members.

Over the past 5 years, there has been a gradual erosion of funding in all dimensions of the Financial Empowerment Program. Throughout the year, our board conducted a comprehensive review of the program. They examined the history of the program, the immense impact it has made in our community, the shifts in the credit counselling landscape and the potential for alternate funding sources. Unfortunately, after much thoughtful consideration but still seeing no path forward to sustainability, they made the very difficult decision to close it.

As the program wound down, we ensured that our community members were connected with neighbouring services for continued access to financial support. Willowbridge will continue to support people in accessing these services to ensure our community is supported in their moment of need.



Together we can make a difference

Willowbridge Community Services is a charitable not-for-profit organization. We provide counselling 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 2021-2022 programs and services. We were able to create new programs, support our existing ones, and reach out to those who need it most because 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



Our Team

Staff List

as of March 31, 2022

Counseling Services

Lori Hensen
Shelley Jonathan
Paul Polito
Joanne MacNeil
Valentin Angardi
Vicki Hartman
Melanie Stiller
Rebecca Londner (MSW Student)
Alexa Spaxman (BSW Student)
Lindsay Braille (BSW Student)

Developmental Services – Pivot Behaviour Consulting

Margaret Elson –Manager
Kristin Campbell Scardellato
Jo-Anne Kens
Carmen McCauley
Mary Mullen
Meagan Nightingale (maternity leave)
Sarah Smith
Catjiana Weld
Michelle Wiersma (maternity leave)
Alisa Gagne (maternity leave)
Safaa Safyane

EnCompass Service Coordination

Edie Mous – Manager

Ongoing Service Coordination

Laurie Redpath-Rolfe
Jackie Thompson
Joanne Towers
Michelle Bell
Kalie Zeltins

Enhanced Service Coordination

Amanda Downs
Jim Kennedy
Heather Mordue
Kathryn Newhouse
Alisha Thornton (leave)

Transitional Aged Youth

Lindsay Dickson

Routes Respite Community

Jenny Poplar – Manager
Shanah Hayes
Allan Murray
Marilyn Ward
Liz MacMillan
Brittany Holland
Harlene Muniz

Administration & IT

Sarah Hammond
Sandra Kennedy
Melissa Kuzler
Alexis Moline
Andrew Oldroyd (IT)

Leadership Team

Leslie Josling Executive Director
Laura Bergeron Director of Services
Jennifer Hanna Director of Human
Resources & Business Operations
Devon Atherton Communications &
Project Manager

Financial Report

April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022

REVENUE

Brant United Way	\$60,000
Ministry of Community and Social Services	\$3,061,095
Bethesda	\$80,000
Donations/Other Revenues	\$112,324
Fees for Service	\$200,160
Other Government Grants	\$102,477
Passport Revenues	\$32,868
Capital funding	\$10,000

Total	\$3,658,924
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EXPENDITURES

Salaries and Benefits	\$2,659,532
Non-Salaried Expenses	\$528,412
Centrally Allocated Administration	\$309,608

Total	\$3,497,552
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Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenditures	\$161,373
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The Willowbridge Audited Financial Statements for the year ending March 31, 2022, 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
- Developmental Disabilities
- 2SLGBTQ+
- Indigenous
- Multicultural
- Men's Specific
- Women's Specific
- Brief Service Intervention

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS (closed)

- 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
 - Behaviour Support Plan Review
- EnCompass Service Coordination
 - Enhanced Service Coordination (Adults)
 - Ongoing Service Coordination (Adults & Kids)
 - Transitional Aged Youth Planning
- Respite
 - Routes Respite Community
 - The Grove
 - Passports
 - Catkins Kids Camps
 - Virtual Groups

GROUPS

- Virtual Groups
- 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 bring positive change to life through counselling, education, and support.

OUR VISION

A community where everyone leads their best life.

54 Brant Avenue, Brantford, ON N3T 3G8 | T: 519.753.4173 | F: 519.753.9287