

distress centres ontario

Moving Forward Through Partnerships
Forging and sustaining supportive
personal and organizational relationships

Capacity Building
Facilitating the beneficial development
of community organizations

Spirit of Volunteerism
Creativity, cooperation, dedication,
listening with empathy

Collaboration and Empowerment
Celebrating uniqueness and working
diligently to meet member needs

Improving the Quality of Life
For all Ontarians, particularly
those experiencing distress



Annual Report 2011-2012

Chair of the Board's Report

It has been such a wonderful honour to hold the office of President this past year and I am eagerly anticipating the second year of my term working with such a dedicated and committed group of individuals who serve on the Board and the staff team of DCO.

This past year saw DCO hold another successful Visioning Day, from which emerged an even stronger desire for the member centres of DCO to collaborate in a province – wide 1800 Suicide line that would enable us to strengthen the community “safety net” in which we all are already playing such an important role.

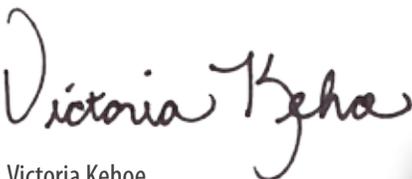
Although Distress Centres have always been linked strongly with suicide prevention and intervention, that work has been delivered via community education and training as well as our crisis telephone lines. DCO member centres have also been engaged in discussion and planning to introduce online chat as a point of contact, information / referral and support to their existing complement of services. This initiative represents the proactive, collaborative, and forward thinking of the Distress Centre movement.

While maintaining full time positions either within our own Distress Centres across the province, or outside of the sector, the Board of Directors could not maintain any forward momentum without the staff of DCO. Working with the truly talented and driven staff team, led by our Executive Director Liz Fisk, has enabled our Board and Committees to remain in contact, meet, communicate and work from across the province. Their virtual and actual support has been invaluable to the Board and I extend our sincere gratitude on their behalf.

It has been said that there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything we wish, however how those hours are used does make the difference between moving projects forward or feeling as if progress has stalled. The time spent by the Board of Directors has demonstrated a sincere commitment to participating in the many committees; some of the highlights include the following:

- The formal drafting of readiness criteria for the province-wide 1800 suicide line that includes best practices and will allow for future linking throughout the nation
- The feasibility review and pre-implementation planning of a province wide web-based service for individuals in distress, crisis and suicidal
- The planning and executing of the Crisis/Distress Centre Networking Day appended to The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention national conference
- The suicide survivor ceremony at The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention conference

I thank you all for your contributions to DCO and to the capacity building in your own communities that result from your efforts every day to so many. As I look forward to year ahead I am confident that our membership will remain strong, share our common vision and will take its rightful place among the organizations that are seen as leaders and innovators in our communities across the province of Ontario.



Victoria Kehoe
Chair, Board of Directors

“There are not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything we wish, however how those hours are used does make the difference between moving projects forward or feeling as if progress has stalled”





“DCO is a filter through which the changes or advancements that an ever-changing world environment might offer, are processed and translated into 21st century models of cooperation, networking and most importantly community development and service.”

Report from the Executive Director

Distress Centres Ontario, or as our founding fathers envisioned us – The Ontario Association of Distress Centres - has a mandate that is different from that of corporations, small businesses or traditional front-line service delivery organizations.

DCO exists to create additional value for our membership – the front-line community service providers - by helping them respond to social, economic, demographic, cultural and technological changes. We are charged with the responsibility to overlay the membership's organizational need to meet, share, and learn from each other with a filter. A filter through which the current changes, advancement or enhancements that an ever-changing world environment might offer, are processed and translated into 21st century models of cooperation, business development, networking and most importantly community development and service.

Quite a heady challenge for a small organization funded solely by membership dues and marginal government support! But DCO is up to the challenge because it has adopted into its organizational culture and proudly displays as its tag line, the philosophy of – Moving Forward through Partnerships.

We welcome the challenge of re-evaluating what partnerships means to DCO, and how we live this philosophy, many times during a business year, but most significantly during our Annual Meeting.

For Distress Centres Ontario partnership doesn't mean being Ontario centric or focusing only on a single service sector. In many ways we have moved beyond the strict interpretation of the vision of our founding fathers. As you read through our 2011-2012 Annual Report you will see how we have moved beyond our geographic boundaries to learn from others, build on their successes and share with them our best practices, vision and our expertise. DCO and its membership, at the community levels, have actively partnered with like-minded organizations to creatively build capacity and facilitate the beneficial development of community organizations and programs.

Our 1-800-suicideOntario program development is led by Asha who lives in Nova Scotia but works directly with British Columbia as well. Jill who led our Crisis Chat feasibility review and heads up development of web-based service in our communities is based in New York State and continues to work extensively in the Contact USA network. DCO is the host for the National Conference for The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention in Niagara. Lynn, our Learning and Development coordinator, operates out of Western Ontario and forges partnerships with various organizations throughout the province including CAMH.

It is important for us to realize that these partnerships are not simply knowledge translation exercises. These kinds of partnership build networks where value flows from organization to organization and person to person based on the quality of the interaction between them. The process of exchanging value is not a static one focused solely on building data bases or repositories of best practices. Our partnerships build strength, increase the ability to adapt and encourage organizational resiliency.

Our association's strength comes from our culture which is embodied in the visual representation of our wheel. Our DCO wheel shows the joining of different spokes that are similar at their core but significantly different in colour and depth. This wheel is a metaphor for how we view ourselves and others we partner with. We celebrate the differences both in approach, structure and service delivery, but we are united in a common vision, dedicated to helping our communities.

Do you see your organization as a dark purple or robust fuchsia colour, or one of the light lilac or pink transparent spokes? Within DCO there is a place for everyone. But equally importantly; even if an organization is not an integral part of our wheel, by being a dues paying member; we make authentic attempts to build community through forging and sustaining supportive personal and organizational relationships.

Much as we said we are up to the challenge our mandate dictates; at this time of significant financial cutbacks to the health and social service sectors and general economic downturn, we cannot understate the prohibitive impact of funding constraints.

It's these constraints that we use as incentive to adapt and build resiliency. However, we must realize as an association that the funding shortages our membership strains under impact their abilities to partake in or avail themselves of the programs, services and value that DCO can impart. We are a sector that has always 'done more with less'. In 2012-2013 as an association we will strive harder to increase the 'less' so we can do 'even more' in creative 21st century models of networking, development and community capacity building.

Elizabeth (Liz) Fisk
Executive Director

1800suicideONTARIO – Strengthening the Suicide Safety Net across Ontario

Right now 1-800-suicide calls go unanswered in Ontario and over 20% of the population (2.6 million people across 80,000 sq. km) do not have direct access to critical distress line services, but that is about to change.

Members of Distress Centres Ontario are working collaboratively to build an innovative network to ensure that Ontario's highest risk callers receive evidence-based, critical support when they need it 24/7/365 no matter where they live.

With a projected call answer rate that rivals 911, the 1800suicideONTARIO Initiative means that when someone decides "today is the day I need support . . ." a trained distress line worker will be there to answer the call.

National Better Practice

This past year has seen great strides in the 1800suicideONTARIO Initiative building on the DCO memberships' foundation of better practices and commitment as Centres of Expertise.

The development of the DCO Provincial Network Criteria is a significant achievement and the result of the committed efforts of various working groups to integrate the leading research and learning from other 1800suicide service providers. It incorporates:

- Better practices in suicide call handling identified from across North America;
- Recent research and recognized approaches for actively engaging the caller to secure their safety including least invasive action and collaborative safe planning;
- Comprehensive suicide risk assessment to fully evaluate suicidal desire, intent, capability as well as buffers and connectedness;
- Standards that meet/exceed international accreditation requirements for crisis and suicide call handling.

The DCO Provincial Network Criteria currently represents a national better practice in the field of distress and crisis line service and identifies clear targets for quality assurance; technology; support & training of frontline workers; and provincial protocols. All distress will meet/exceed the DCO Provincial Network Criteria prior to joining the 1800suicideONTARIO network.

Reflective of their commitment to better practices, the recent Network Criteria Review revealed that 87% of the DCO membership are either already meeting these rigorous service delivery standards or are in the process of implementing them.

In the past year, efforts were also made to create two additional provincial online tools to support centres in answering 1800suicideONTARIO calls; the DCO Standard Suicide Risk Assessment and the DCO Emergency Resource Database. Both are in the final stages of development.

Across the Continuum

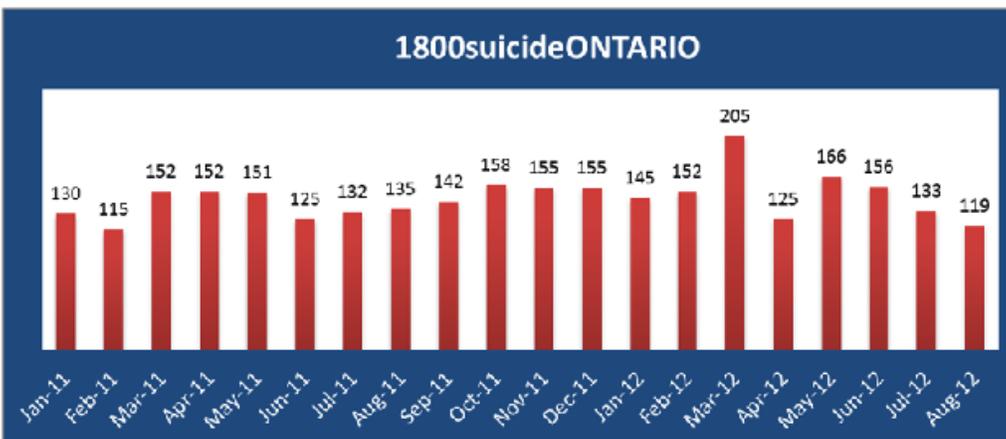
Longitudinal research reinforces what Distress Centres have known for some time: that suicide is not simply an impulsive response to a single crisis. It is better understood as a chronic condition and the need is for longer-term support to end risk.

Call statistics from 1800suicide in other provinces clearly show that people are reaching out to this service for support across the continuum from suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

Through the 1800suicideONTARIO Initiative, DCO members are answering the 'call to rise' and coming together to strengthen the suicide safety net across the entire province.

"The majority of DCO member centres have currently met 93% of the Provincial Network Criteria to join the 1800suicideONTARIO network."

"Call volume to 1800suicide in Ontario has increased 9.6% from 2011 to 2012 even though the service is not yet active in the province and there has been no promotion. While the service is being implemented by DCO members, these callers are being guided to their local distress line for support."



“Centres seem to agree that providing Crisis Chat service is the right thing to do for the people of Ontario. It creates greater accessibility to mental health support for people in crisis, especially younger people. Interestingly enough, centres are also looking forward to working more closely together. They understand that the network approach brings greater opportunities for developing strategies for marketing and funding across the province and see this as the second most important reasons to launch Crisis Chat.”

Online Crisis Services

Expanding Access to Mental Health Support: Text-based Crisis Services in Ontario

Worldwide, crisis centers are expanding the services they provide from the traditional phone-based service, to text-based services. Centers in the USA and in Australia providing Crisis Chat service have shown that there is a tremendous need for the service and that the service can be effective at reducing levels of distress.

Now centres in Ontario are developing online, text-based crisis services. In spring 2012, the centres worked with Jill Wolski, a consultant in online crisis services and a founder of CrisisChat.org, to complete a Feasibility Study in which distress centres weighed their readiness for implementation.

A set of Criteria for online service implementation was defined, with details under these four broad categories:

- 1 – The creation of an Online Services Website Portal.
- 2 – Utilization and optimization of a technology platform to deliver new modes of service.
- 3 – Capacity building to ensure demand will be met.
- 4 – Training and supervision for a text-based environment.

Summary of Results:

Centers all agreed they were not “ready” for chat implementation, but most indicated they are willing to move toward implementation with support from DCO.

Centers agreed that their largest areas of concern in implementing online crisis services are:

- Achieving criteria in the readiness document.
- Creating internal capacity to meet demand.
- Covering the legal risks of online service.

Centers all agreed on a Network Approach.

Four centers said they have current internal capacity to provide chat service if a website is created and DCO can provide technical support on training and supervision. Other centers indicated they will be ready to launch in a year or so, and only two declined online service.

There is current capacity to launch crisis chat service at 4-12 hours per week with two to four centers providing service at a time.

A follow-up survey was administered after a Crisis Chat Lunch-and-Learn and centers were asked, among other questions, “What are the most compelling reasons to launch Crisis Chat in Ontario?” Centres answered, in order of importance:

Expanded services for people of all ages and young people that feel more comfortable reaching out online.

Opportunity to work more closely with other centres in Ontario.

Opportunity to develop strong marketing and branding presence for all centers across Ontario.

Opportunity to sync development strategies with DCO and other centers.

Opportunities for enhanced funding for my center.

“With the use of on-line technology, DCO Association leaders are able to participate in sessions from their office computers over their lunch hours.”

#5
Limits and Boundaries

#6
Elder Abuse

#7
Abuse in Intimate Relationships - Part 2, the Process of Leaving

#8
Mood Disorders

#9
Dementia

#10
Responding to Callers with Financial Concerns

Lunch and Learn Webcasts:

In the past year we have increased our educational offerings to focus on information that would support the DCO Association leaders and staff. We know that leaders within our association often don't have much 'spare' time and their centres have limited budgets. With the use of on-line technology, DCO Association leaders are able to participate in sessions from their office computers over their lunch hours. Sessions are delivered by outside guest speakers as well as by some very gifted DCO Members who were willing to share their knowledge and expertise. We've been successful in providing our leaders with seven themes that were well attended and enjoyed.

Cultural Competency in Community Services – Sarah Squire (2 part seminar)

The Community Development Coordinator for the Durham region delivered two insightful sessions reviewing the importance of culture and various points of diversity to be considered when developing agency policies and procedures.

Social Media in the Business World – Susan Wiggins

The ED and a panel of young marketing/communications staff from Interior Designers of Canada, shared information about how they used Social Media effectively in their business to spread the message of what they do. This session was very popular and well received.

Accessibility Standards for Customer Services – Marlene Beitz

A Trainer of Volunteers with Distress Centre North Halton and also a private consultant, Marlene delivered a very helpful and informative session which focused on preparing for the January 1st, 2012 deadline of the Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards.

Volunteer Retention – Donna Lockhardt

A renowned expert and experienced consultant in the field of Volunteer Retention presented information relevant to all DCO association leaders in how they can improve their processes for recruitment and retention of volunteers based on a survey of volunteering within our movement.

Accreditation Chat – Gail Cartwright and Marlene Beitz

We were fortunate to learn from the ED and Trainer of Volunteers from Distress Centre North Halton as they shared their experiences in getting ready to submit their Intent to Survey for Accreditation. Participants were able to ask questions and expressed renewed commitment to working on Accreditation after this session.

Crisis Chat Online Service – Jill Wolski

A Contact Lifeline (USA) Director and also consultant for DCO (Crisis Chat) delivered a very informative session which focused on the US experience with text based support to people in distress and research regarding online crisis services.

Tips for Writing SOV Nominations – Brenda Buchanan

The Volunteer and Office Coordinator from Oakville Distress Centre, delivered a very helpful session on a detailed approach to writing Spirit of Volunteerism Nominations. This session was recorded and will be available to centre leaders for further reference.

Four Week Certificate Courses on-line:

In May 2011, DCO staff and call responders were able to participate in a second offering of How to Work Effectively with Challenging Callers – the Spirit of Motivational Interviewing presented by Gilles Brideau. There were over 150 participants who attended the online webinar series that focused on enhanced communication skills when responding to callers who present with difficult issues.

In May 2012, we were fortunate to offer our distress line call responders the 4-session series, Understanding Mood Disorders presented by Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Ahmad Nashef. This series addressed the varying types of mood disorders and how to best respond to callers who present with these health issues. Participants were invited to email their questions which were responded to each week. Approximately 130 call responders completed the 4 sessions and received this much valued information from our expert presenter.

These webinar sessions occur in the evening with the intent to offer training that is convenient for all call takers to attend, either on their personal computer at home or in groups at their local distress centre. They also ensure that all participants in the series obtain the same information across the province.

Visioning leads us to Strategic Priorities 2012 - 2015

In preparation for the upcoming three years, board members, staff, and over 25 leaders from DCO member centres met in September of 2011. Their goal was to build on sessions held in May of that year which were focused on setting directions and priorities for the next three (3) to five (5) years for Distress Centres Ontario within the context of the accomplishments and challenges encountered during the implementation of the previous three-year strategic plan.

As well as updating the association's mission statement, reviewing all current projects, services and programs and completing a SWOT analysis, Four (4) Critical Success Factors and 20 Strategic Priorities and/or Projects were identified to be achieved in the upcoming three years.

Those in attendance also discussed decision-making processes within the context of the association and the wish to develop networks for integration of service delivery throughout the province. The practice of Member Working Groups allowing local centres to provide project input and to be informed and Advisory Groups to direct network activities were adopted as ways to move forward. Developing all aspects of the formal decision making process in a goal for the Governance Committee during the upcoming year.

Mission

Distress Centres Ontario is a provincial network that leads, promotes and builds the capacity of community-based agencies engaged in activities related to suicide prevention and improving the emotional quality of life for Ontarians.

Vision

To foster and maintain an environment where the social fabric of Ontario is supported and no Ontarian in emotional distress suffers in silence.

We value

Accountability: to our funder(s) and a range of other interested parties, but most especially to the member agencies of DCO. Our Board and staff are committed to transparency in decision-making.

Collaboration and Empowerment: it is critical that we work diligently to meet the needs of our members and help them to develop the Distress Centre movement in Ontario. Our success will be measured by our ability to forge and sustain new partnerships with agencies and organizations who share a similar interest in improving the lives of those who face significant emotional and mental health issues.

Inclusion: we welcome and celebrate the unique and distinct talents that each member agency brings to DCO. We are committed to dealing with our current and future members with dignity and respect.

Integrity: DCO is a credible and fair organization that can always be trusted to successfully represent the needs of its members.

Leadership: we are passionately committed to being the tireless central voice for the distress centre movement within Ontario.

DCO Critical Success Factors:

#1

Effective collaboration with the DCO Network

#2

Adequate Funding

#3

Public Awareness of our mandate, services and the work we do

#4

Common standards, best practices and benchmarking

Hosting CASP/ACPS 2012

Distress Centres Ontario, along with dedicated suicide prevention specialists, is hosting the Canadian national conference on the prevention of suicide, CASP 2012: Stepping Out of the Darkness for the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP), in Niagara Falls, Ontario, October 15 – 17th, 2012.

Awareness, Attention, and Action will be the focus of discussions, symposia, networking, presentations and workshops designed to help those present tap into the growing openness regarding suicide prevention. This year over 400 individuals are expected to attend, brought together by our shared interest in suicide prevention. DCO's staff and centre leaders have dedicated a very significant time component of their work days and also significant volunteer contributions to make this conference a success.

This is an aspect of partnership that the board, staff and centre members feel is very important. There will be three complementary streams: The main conference, Stepping Out of the Darkness ; the Annual DCO Crisis/Distress Line Networking Conference: The Partnership Toolkit; and an inaugural Educational Sector Conference on Suicide.

It is hoped that by the end of the events, attendees will be able to:

- Describe recent research findings in suicidology and recognize how results may be relevant to their own work
- Identify psychological and biological risk factors for suicide across the life span to improve patient outcomes and reduce the incidence of suicidal behaviour
- List best practices for organizations and agencies in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention programs and policies
- Describe current cultural ideas, beliefs and attitudes about suicide and suicide prevention to inform strategies to reduce stigma
- Describe the impact of suicide on survivors to improve care to people who have lost a loved one to suicide
- Return to their own communities and organizations with new ideas and energy to prevent suicide after networking with conference attendees



niagara falls

october 15 -17 octobre 2012

stepping out of the darkness
awareness, attention, action

Join us in presentations, workshops, symposia and through networking events to tap into the growing openness regarding suicide prevention.

Visit www.casp2012.ca to learn about the conference, the interesting speakers and presenters and also to register.

Our volunteers are appreciated and recognized

The dedicated volunteers at our member centres make a significant contribution to their communities and the Spirit of Volunteerism Recognition event allows DCO the opportunity to extend our appreciation. By acknowledging the nominees and recipients of this award, each year we say thank you to all the volunteers throughout the province that they represent. Thank you for carrying on the self-less tradition that started over 40 years ago, and for listening empathetically to our callers.

2012 Spirit of Volunteerism nominees include

Gloria Alban, Dr	Toronto Distress Centre - North York	Recipient
Jim Brown	Distress Centre Durham	Recipient
Kyrsten Boucher	Distress Centre Niagara	Recipient - Young Adult
Dara Clancy	Distress Centre Oakville	Recipient
Daniela Ronca	Distress Centre Peel	Recipient - Young Adult
Chester Rozen	Telecare Cambridge	Lifetime
Steve Raff	Distress Centre Niagara	Nominee
Alice DeKleer	Distress Centre North Halton	Nominee
Iona Lobb	Distress Centre North Halton	Nominee
Carol Edgar	Toronto Distress Centre - Downtown	Nominee
John Childs	Toronto Distress Centre - Downtown	Nominee
Mary Hogan	Toronto Distress Centre - North York	Nominee
Samuel Chiasson	Toronto Distress Centre - North York	Nominee
Jennifer Campion	Toronto Distress Centre - Scarborough	Nominee

The Eric Hotson Lifetime Achievement Award

The Spirit of Volunteerism selection committee has been struck by the many attributes the various nominees' possess. They have also noticed that, in some years, individuals are nominated who are shining reflections of this special spirit, and also share this spirit with their centre and community for many years.

In this, the 5th anniversary year, the category of Lifetime Achievement was developed to recognize those special individuals who have supported their centres for many years and in many ways. It is the committee's distinct pleasure to name this award – The Eric Hotson Lifetime Achievement Award.

The 2012 Recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award is Chester Rosen from Tele-Care Distress Line Cambridge. He has involved, headed or performed every role the centre required for the past twenty years. "The centre would not be in operation if it weren't for Chester and his undying commitment."

National Volunteer Week – recognizing every volunteer in our network

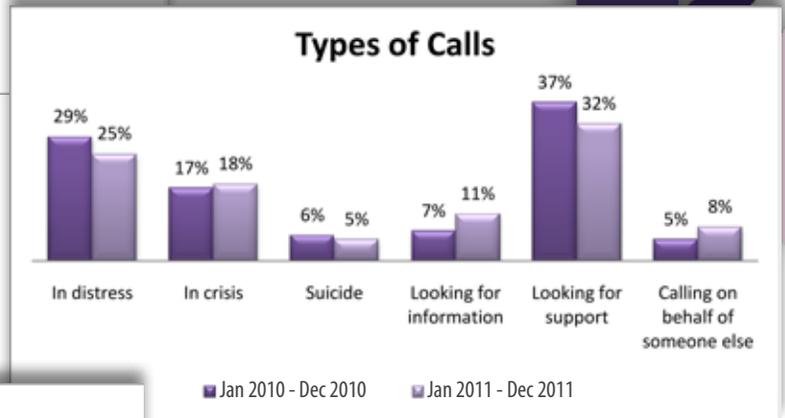
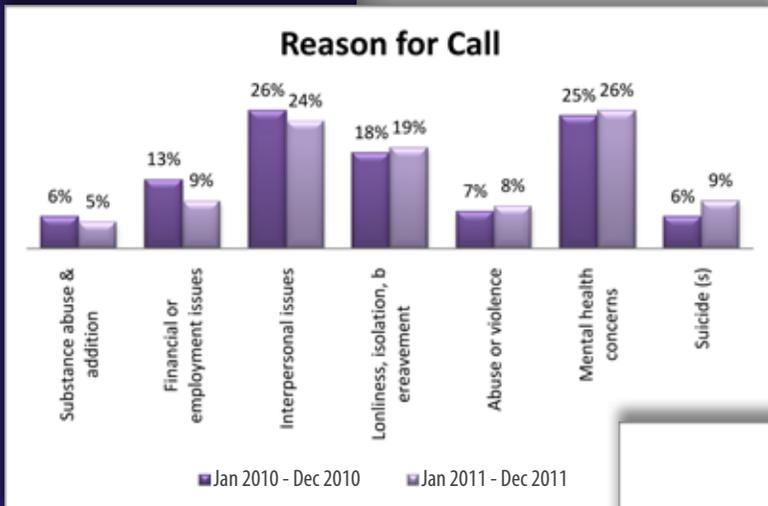
To celebrate the 5th anniversary of THE SPIRIT OF VOLUNTEERISM and to recognize the contributions of the volunteers at our member centres, this year, Distress Centre Ontario thanked volunteers across the association by creating and distributing special certificates for National Volunteer Week.

Over 1,600 certificates were created and sent to our member centres for distribution to their volunteers!

We would like to once again acknowledge the contribution of all our volunteers for the work they do.



Reasons why Ontarians call our line and the types of calls we take



The Ontario Association of Distress Centres is funded by The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care for \$213,000 per fiscal year. It receives very modest donations from the community at large. The majority of fundraising is done at the local level to support individual Distress Centres. DCO's membership fees are based on the financial size of its members. Detailed financial reports are available upon request.



distress centres

ontario

MOVING FORWARD THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

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



Ontario

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE

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

DCO Board of Directors 2011-2012

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Lynn Brewin

1-800-suicide Ontario Coordinator

Asha Croggon

Administration and Program Facilitator

Jackie Grigsby

Learning Forums Webmaster

Dave Cooper

Consultant, Online Crisis Services

Jill Wolski

Member Agencies

Contact information for member centres can be found on our website at dcontario.org

Telecare Cambridge Distress Centre
Distress Centre Durham
Telephone Aid Line Kingston (TALK)
Developmental Services of Leeds and Grenville
London and District Distress Centre
Distress Centre Niagara
Distress Centre North Halton
Distress Centre Oakville
Distress Centre Ottawa and Region
Distress Centre Peel
Family Counselling Centre (Sarnia & Lambton County)
Toronto Distress Centres
Distress Centre Waterloo Region
Community Torchlight Guelph/Wellington/Dufferin
Distress Centre Windsor-Essex County