



CHRISTIAN
COUNSELLING
OTTAWA

Christian Counselling Ottawa
2023 Annual Report

Message from our Board Chair

Dear CCO clients, family, therapists, supporters, and members.

I appreciate having the opportunity to serve as the Chair of the COO board. From the report you will see that 2023 has been a very busy year as our therapists assisted our many clients in their journey to restore and maintain their mental wellbeing.

In any given year 1 in 5 Canadians struggles with mental illness, and by the time we reach mid-life (40 years) 1 in 2 Canadians have experienced mental illness. Clearly, the need for mental health services is great and CCO is committed to providing excellent care to people with mental health concerns and to growing our services to meet the needs of our community. For example, at CCO we recognize that young people are now experiencing mental illness and or substance use more than any other group, and 39% of Ontario High school students indicate moderate to serious levels of psychological distress. As well approximately 4% of adults and 14% of high-school students report contemplating suicide in the past year. For this reason, we have sought out funding to update our Youth Education Program. We are thankful for the generous gift from our partners at Arlington Woods Church and we will be able to move forward on this important initiative.

At CCO we are also aware that Canadians with the lowest income are 3 to 4 times more likely than those in the highest income group to report poor mental health. It comes as no surprise that poor mental health is also closely linked to being under employed or having no employment, thus perpetuating poverty and poor health outcomes for families and individuals. This is why we continue to seek donations for our subsidy program. Mental health therapy brings healing and changes lives! Thank you to our supporters and for being partners with us in providing important interventions that impact people today and potentially for generations to come.

The annual report is a time for reflection on all the hard work that was done this year. I want to thank our clients for their openness in addressing their mental health concerns. It takes courage to accept help and commit yourself to follow through with your therapy. Your courage is the reason our therapists are here – we see what you have accomplished and celebrate your success. I also wish to thank our therapists - they are CCO! It is their professional practice and commitment to serve our clients that sets CCO apart. In addition, I wish to thank our Clinical Director, Jen Leblanc, our Business Director, Kerri Guther, and our Executive Director, Craig Hillier who ceaselessly served CCO through a year where CCO faced fiscal and operational challenges.

Thank you to our supporters! You believe in what CCO offers, have partnered in our Ministry and in providing care to the vulnerable, those struggling with mental health concerns.

Finally, thank you, fellow board members, although we are few, we are mighty with God's grace. Let's keep praying that God will bring others to join us around the board table!

In His service,

Carmen Hust, Chair of the CCO Board.

What is Christian Counselling Ottawa?

CCO is an incorporated charity that has existed since 1978. We are a group of registered psychotherapists who offer sessions to anyone who comes to our door. Our team is registered with the College of Registered Psychotherapists or with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. Psychotherapy involves the use of proven therapeutic techniques (e.g. cognitive behavioural, solution-focused, emotion-focused, psychodynamic, systemic, mindfulness-based, and expressive arts) to foster changes in patterns of thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and relationships.

Since the pandemic, we now offer online services to clients who prefer not to come into the office. This has opened the opportunity for us to serve clients who do not live in the Ottawa area and, it has allowed our team to hold sessions outside of the main office in safe, private settings.

Since our inception, we have set fees using a sliding scale based on household income. The Intake Coordinator uses a fee chart to establish the amount each client will pay and then confirms the fees with the client before sessions begin. We increased our fees in 2023 to become more competitive with the industry standard and to meet the rising cost of expenses. There has been an increase in the level of insurance benefits coverage by many providers which is allowing clients to pursue more sessions in a year.

If a client comes to us with an income below \$40,000, does not have insurance coverage, and cannot pay the full rate, our subsidy committee will discuss the case. This Committee is made up of the Intake Coordinator, Clinical Director, Business Director, and Executive Director. Subsidies are given based on need and resources available. The subsidy committee seeks to help each client in the best way possible. There is a cap on the number of subsidized sessions clients receive and this ensures as many clients as possible are given the opportunity to access the subsidy funds.

CCO continues to function mainly on revenues from session fees, however, donations are still critical to our ongoing ministry. Our donors help us to subsidize sessions and cover expenses for the charity. We are grateful for the community of individuals and churches that support this ministry. Together we are making a difference in the lives of people in our community and beyond.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values



Our Mission

CCO provides Psychotherapy and related services to assist people in effectively managing life's mental health challenges, extending both compassion and faith.



Our Vision

Every person in Ontario is given an opportunity to achieve improved and sustained mental health.



Our Values

In addition to CCO's mission and vision, CCO considers its core values to be foundational to its internal behaviour and how it presents and interacts with partners, clients, and other outside organizations.

We the directors, staff, therapists, volunteers and supporting community of CCO value:

Our Clients: We value the lasting mental health of our clients.

Stewardship of Resources: We value stewardship of CCO's financial and other assets, and the volunteers, partners and donors who sacrificially give to our mission.

Christian Principles: We value the provision of God-honouring, accessible Psychotherapy services to serve people of all faiths.

Client Confidentiality and Privacy: We value client confidentiality and privacy.

Professionalism in Service: We value professionalism and quality delivery of Psychotherapy and related services, and the staff who administer and deliver those services.

A Fair, Equitable and Safe Working Environment: We value a caring, safe, healthy, and harassment-free working environment that supports personal and professional growth.

What GOD Has Done in 2023

2023 was a year of significant change at CCO. It began with leadership changes as Craig Hillier became the Executive Director and Jen Leblanc was promoted to Clinical Director. In December we welcomed Chelsea Chandler as our new Intake Coordinator. We had turnover in our therapist team, but we finished 2023 with 11 great therapy resources including 2 interns and with plans to continue recruiting in 2024.

Donations dropped in 2023 at a time when costs were increasing. CCO managed the fiscal pressure by downsizing office space, becoming more virtual including decreased IT and other expenditures. As stewards of your donations, we aim to spend wisely and maximize our impact with every dollar spent. We reduced both monthly costs and ongoing liability by moving our offices to 804 Greenbank Road.

We increased rates and implemented new policies to strengthen the ministry and secure its future. We continue to seek support and donations to fulfill our mission and increase our impact on mental health in our region.

CCO's net financial result for 2023 was a loss of \$52.3k as detailed in the financial reports. We received \$53.9k in donations for a combined investment of \$106.2k. Not only is CCO an efficient charity and service provider but it invests heavily in making our clients healthier. CCO delivered 2413 sessions during the year and more than 75% of all client sessions were subsidized at some level. That said, CCO introduced session caps for subsidy clients reducing the subsidy cost per client in a bid to return to break even and serve more clients with fewer sessions over a longer horizon.

The Board of Directors, Management and Therapists believe CCO has a great future ahead and we look forward to impacting many lives in 2024 and beyond.

Business Report

As noted earlier, 2023 was a year of change at CCO. Though it was a challenging time at CCO, God's timing is perfect. A few changes are described below for those interested in the details.

Jen Leblanc was promoted to the Clinical Director role in 2023 replacing long time CD Joanne Nyland. Several other resource changes led to a significant challenge and opportunity. New financial and process controls were established, limited repricing occurred, and our infrastructure and contracts were reviewed from end to end.

The need for office facilities and IT infrastructure was driving our cost base in the wrong direction. To securely operate and continue our subsidy fund we reduced ongoing costs and liability, we moved to a different office location, and we revamped our approach to IT. With the rise in virtual/video therapy and newer cloud services, CCO became IT-virtual.

We migrated from Microsoft hosted services to Microsoft 365 and MS Teams integrating our business side more tightly. The clinical side continues with OWL and MS Teams is a backup solution to the OWL video sessions. Security and privacy are critical to our operations.

We also negotiated some contract changes, and some vendors were replaced. Most session caps and repricing activities were implemented over time to limit negative client impacts, particularly those already in our care.

CCO needs to become more competitive and ensure fair pay for its registered psychotherapists, however these pay increases have been delayed until 2024 as the 2023 finances would not support the increases.

In 2023 we completed the final execution of the Ontario Trillium Fund (OTF) grant awarded the previous year and completed our obligations to the government for that funding. Unfortunately, our application to OTF for funding submitted in 2023 was declined leaving a gap for internal education as well as community education events.

In 2023 CCO submitted a competitive funding request to Arlington Woods Free Methodist Church (AWFMC) as part of their capital campaign and their decision to give back to the community. AWFMC selected CCO's proposal for redevelopment of our Youth Education Program. The actual funding was delayed until 2024 giving CCO some additional time to plan the work.

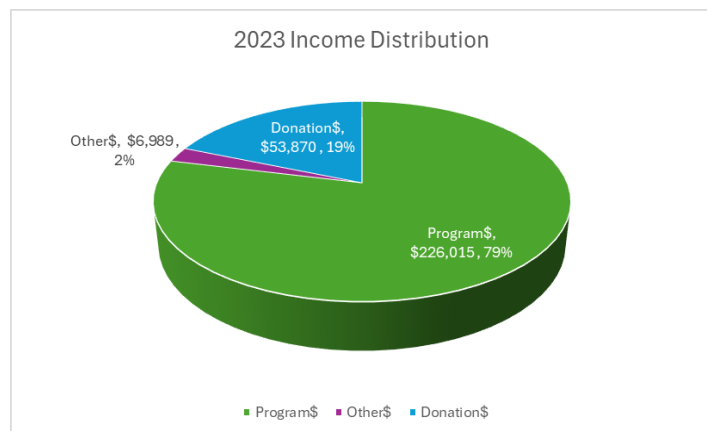
During this past year CCO adjusted our reporting method for the subsidy fund. Previously the subsidy was a complex report based on a budget estimate and it didn't fully consider the actual session cost. We currently assess average costs and average revenue based on month-to-month results. This change also highlighted the level of subsidy CCO contributes to its clients, which was well beyond the donations brought into CCO (approximately double for 2023).

A management committee was formed (known as CLIC) to assess all subsidy requests. CLIC brings our clinical, ministry and financial realities back into balance, assuring a more stable financial position in the future.

Many charities operate well below 100%. CCO is proud to operate at nearly 200% of donations, however it must return to a more balanced approach, and it must pay therapists and staff a fair and more equitable rate. We thank the current and previous therapists who gave so much to fulfill their mission in assisting hurting lives in our city.

A numeric perspective of CCO 2023:

- >Delivered 2413 sessions in 2023,
- >Served 414 clients,
- >Subsidized 77% of sessions (at some level),
- >Invested \$106k in therapy assistance (197% of donation level),
- >Contracted 8 new therapists,
- >Produced \$287k of income (<19% came from donations)
- >\$53.9k received in donations received (churches 58% & individuals 42%)



Management and the Board of Directors undertook a review of the CCO strategy, Vision, Mission and both scope of practice and region of practice. This work continued in 2024 and is expected to result in a bolder and broader vision by late 2024. CCO remains committed to its core values and our purpose, delivery of professional Psychotherapy to our clients. The By-laws are being updated in 2024 following this strategic work and CCO believes it will remain in compliance with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA).

We are thankful for all who contributed to a successful 2023. We believe God

used CCO in our city and we believe He will make a way for CCO to continue, that lives will be changed through this ministry for years to come and those who support this ministry are enabling kingdom work with eternal dividends.



Craig Hillier
Executive Director



Kerri Guther
Business Director

Figure 1: individual sessions per month in 2020-2023

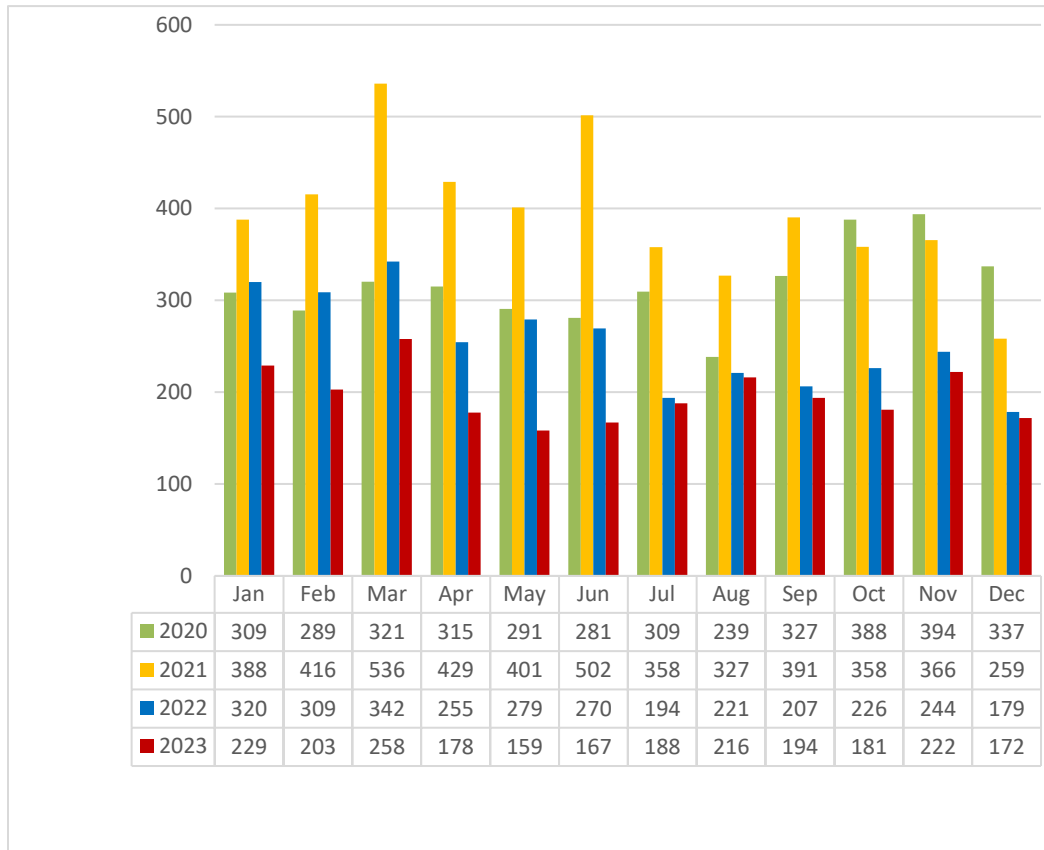
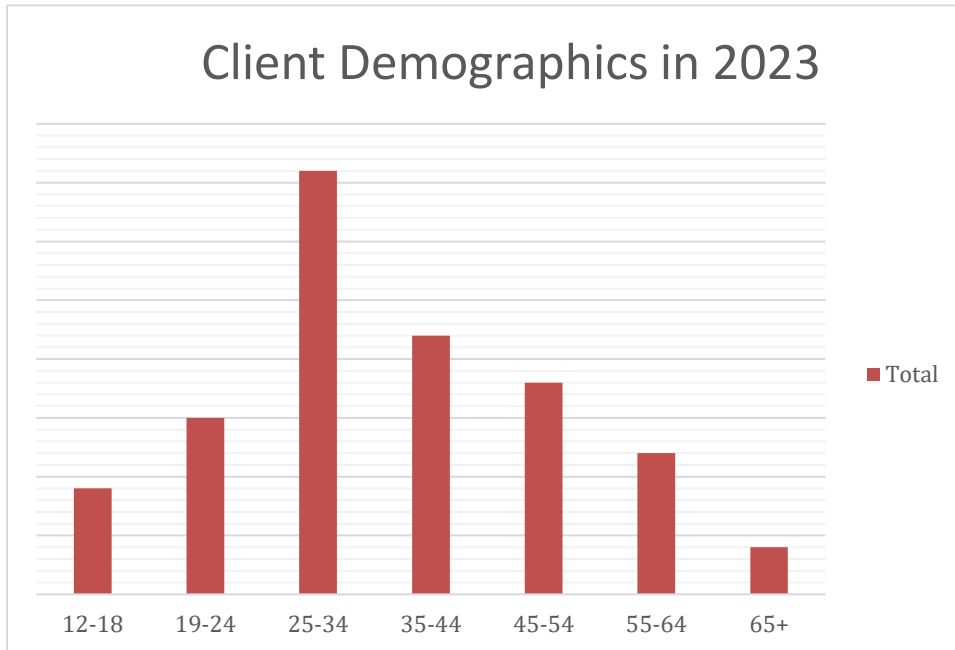


Figure 2: demographic of clients



CCO's Intern Program

A wonderful part of the CCO team is our Interns. This program accepts students who are completing their Masters in Counselling degree and want to have a space to integrate faith into their sessions. Under the direction of our Clinical Director, each student receives supervision and guidance in conducting client sessions and completing the administrative tasks such as booking sessions, communicating with clients, and writing clinical notes. In 2023 we had one intern for the winter who was finishing her internship for Yorkville University. In May, two more students joined the team, one from Yorkville University and one from Tyndale University. This program benefits the students and CCO as we can offer sessions at a reduced rate if a client is willing (and the Clinical Director deems the client suitable) to see a student. In 2023, our interns conducted over 460 sessions with over 50 different clients.

Connecting

Raising awareness is crucial in sustaining CCO as a ministry. Our newsletter list continues to grow as people subscribe. We published an announcement when Craig joined the team and a December newsletter to communicate all that had happened at CCO throughout the year.

Our Social media accounts have been active, and Chelsea has taken on the task of keeping these current by uploading Reels to Instagram and posts to Facebook and LinkedIn. Our Facebook interactions increased by 67.9% and our Instagram interaction increased by 268%. The more we publish, the more people see us and know we exist. Making your network part of CCO's network by reporting content helps spread the word about CCO.

We continue to use the services of Groundwork to keep our website up to date and fresh. Chelsea and Kerri also work to keep it current. We obtained a Google Grant that has given us access to \$10K USD per month to 'purchase' search words that will draw more people to our website and allow us to be more easily found when someone is searching. Chelsea has taken on the challenge of working on this project.

Prayer Ministry

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Phil 4:6 NIV)

Christian Counselling Ottawa was started and continues to be a ministry whose staff strive to serve God faithfully putting their trust in Him. We believe that prayer is an important part of following Jesus's example, and discerning what God would have us do. We are blessed to have a team of people who are committed to praying for CCO on a regular basis. An email is sent out monthly, covering the clients, therapists, staff, and board of directors in prayer, and asking for provision to run the organization. In addition to twelve regular emails, three special requests were made throughout 2023.

2023 was a year of many challenges and changes, and often we felt like the disciples in the boat, leaving us wondering where God was when the storm came up. But we are reminded in Deuteronomy 7:9 to “Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God.” In looking back over 2023, there was a lot of uncertainty, but we can clearly see that God WAS faithful and answered prayers, often in amazing ways that we had not foreseen.

To highlight only a few of many answered prayers:

We had been praying for an Executive Director for over a(two?) year. God sent us Craig Hillier to lead and guide CCO in March. Craig came with much business experience, a heart for God and has been a great blessing to CCO.

We had a high turnover of staff in 2023. This included our Clinical Director who provided mentorship and supervision for the therapists. God answered our need by providing us with external supervisors from Tyndale University and moving Jen Leblanc into the role of Clinical Director. As the need for more therapists grew, God kept on providing. He is faithful!

We prayed for wisdom for the Board of Directors who had many important decisions to make so that CCO would be better stewards of resources. This included relocating and restructuring.

In June, we asked to pray very specifically for storage space while we transitioned, and eventually a new location with a compassionate landlord. In a very short period, God answered this by providing not just storage space, but a new office location on Greenbank Road with a landlord who is a Christian!

We are very grateful for all of you who lift up CCO in prayer. We started 2023 with 30 people on the email list. Of those, two asked to be unsubscribed and one was asked to be added, ending the year with a total of 29. We know that many others are also praying who are not on the email list. God hears all our prayers. Truly, we can look back on 2023 and say with confidence that God was with us in the boat! He is the faithful God.

In His Service,

Sue Skinner

Fundraising & Donations

With all the changes that occurred in 2023, we restricted our fundraising efforts to electronic mailouts and online platform appeals.

Twice during the year, a letter from the Executive Director was sent via email to the churches in the Ottawa area. These served to inform the pastors of what CCO could offer and to appeal for donations.

We participated in Giving Tuesday, the day when people are encouraged to donate to charities. Through social media ads and posts, we were able to raise just over \$1000. Our Christmas campaign which was held through December brought in an additional \$1500.

Churches donated just over \$31,000 over the year. Individual (including the amounts mentioned above) donations totaled almost \$23,000.

According to national trend data, donations to charities were down by 5%. Almost 54% of all donors give microdonations (\$1-\$100) which were down by almost 16%. As financial pressures increase, the amount of donation dollars available decreases. CCO has become more fiscally prudent over 2023 to not rely on a high amount of donations though there are still some needed to meet our budget. We continue to be thankful for all the individuals and churches who continue to support CCO. We could not do what we do without the support!

Thank you to our ministry partners:

CCO could not function without our ministry partners. A huge thank you to everyone who prayed for us, made donations or sponsored clients. Every donation counts toward helping those that come to us for help but need financial assistance.

- Arlington Wood Free Methodist Church - Kanata Community Church CRC
- Barrhaven Fellowship Church - Knox Presbyterian Church
- Calvary Christian Reformed Church (Manotick)
- Calvin Christian Reformed Church - Ottawa Church of God
- Cedarview Alliance Church - Parkdale United Church
- Christian Reformed Church of Williamsburg - St. Peter & St Paul's Anglican Church
- Gloucester Presbyterian Church - Vankleek Hill Baptist Church
- Kanata Baptist Church - Woodvale Pentecostal Church

Thank You to our Therapists:

Our therapists are an amazing group of people who give their time and talents to the ministry of CCO. They are compassionate professionals who assist every client to overcome life's challenges. Each brings different qualities and strengths to the team allowing us to offer diverse modalities to help clients. We are thankful for each one!

Our Team as of December 31, 2023:

- Craig Hillier – Executive Director
- Kerri Guther – Business Director
- Jennifer LeBlanc - Clinical Director
- Chelsea Chandler – Intake Coordinator

Therapists:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| - Heidi McNair | - Janice Collins |
| - John Paul Austring | - Mariam Hanna |
| - Nan Wang | - Nathan Hicks |
| - Willis Bengnwi | - Wintana Amare |

Interns:

- Bosook Kang
- Jordan Camarda

We had many personnel changes in 2023.

We welcomed Craig Hillier as Executive Director, filling the role that had been vacant since March 2021. Craig is an independent consultant and business owner and will split his time consulting and here at CCO as our Executive Director.

Chelsea Chandler joined the team as our Intake Coordinator in December 2023. Chelsea has spent the last 8 years as a stay-at-home mom. Growing up in the church, she has served in areas including Children and Youth ministries among others. Her previous work history was focused on Finance and Admin, and she is passionate about planning, organization, problem solving and thinking outside the box. She is proud to be the first point of contact, walking alongside people who have taken the first step in healing.

Thank You to our Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors

Carmen Hust - Chair

Vacant - Vice Chair

Alexis Carty - Secretary

Karen Fishwick - Treasurer

Our Board Advisors

Alexander (Sandy) Davidson

Craig Hillier – Executive Director

2023 was a year of transition in personnel and a year of rebuilding financially. Many decisions had to be made by the Board and ED to help CCO continue to be viable. Many extra hours were spent grappling with issues. Thanks to each of the board members as they tirelessly gave above and beyond.

Special thanks to Rosanne Wall and Sue Skinner who stepped away from the Board in June 2023. You led well through a time when the ED seat was vacant. It was not easy, but you lent a hand wherever it was needed. Thank you, also, to Ron Kaden as he completed his term on the Board in December 2023. You served many years in the capacity of Treasurer and led with integrity through a difficult season. May the Lord bless you for the time and effort you put into the ministry of CCO.