



# ConnexOntario

2020-2021 Annual Report

**Adapting  
Through  
Adversity**



"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

-Jimmy Dean

## Greetings from our Board!

The Board of Directors has been extremely gratified to witness the dedication, adaptability, and strength shown by the Connex staff over the past year.

In spite of many personal and professional obstacles that have arisen they have been able to continue to provide exceptional customer service across all areas of our business: data collection and report production; developing and sustaining youth mental health initiatives through mindyourmind; and ensuring individuals seeking information and assistance for themselves or their families, friends, or clients, have their questions answered in a comprehensive and timely manner.

The need for our services has become even clearer in these pandemic times. People are reaching out for information at all levels, and for all of the various types of information that we have available. We saw the increasing need for referrals to treatment services of various types, as well as increased requests for reports about service availability and need. We continue to make important connections between the people who need supports with the people who offer them and to raise awareness of the gaps in the system. We look forward to continuing to play this vital role in the year ahead.

A quote that helps to sum up the resilience of our staff this past year "I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination (Jimmy Dean)." We are very appreciative of the staff's commitment to Connex and our callers.

Sue Hillis, Chair  
on behalf of the ConnexOntario Board of Directors

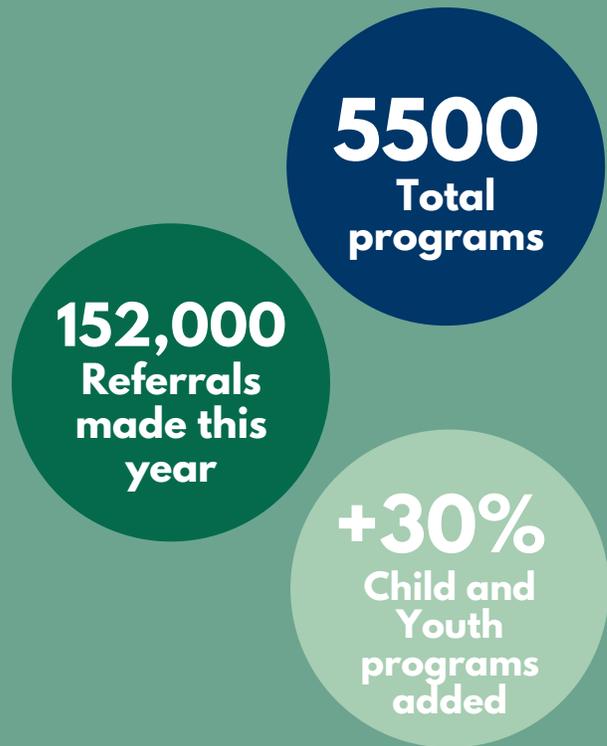


# 2020 - Need We Say More?

Pandemic. Stay Safe. Uncertain times. Racial Inequity.

All familiar terms and phrases we've heard over the past 12 months of 2020 and 2021.

What was certain was ConnexOntario's dedication and commitment to supporting the people of Ontario through this incredibly difficult time. This year brought changes in the kinds of calls we saw, which reflected difficult situations and feelings that people were facing.

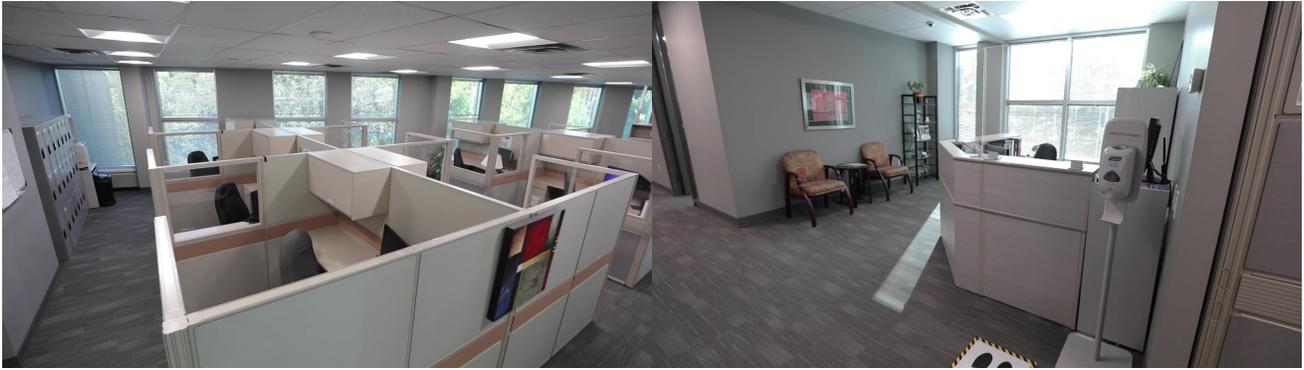


**In 2020, our System Navigation and Information Specialists saw the longest call lengths ever.**

## Challenging Bias

In 2020, people of all races voiced their outrage regarding the tragic death of George Floyd. This sparked a revolution that emphasized the level of racism and systematic racism that exists within our communities. Heartbreak, sorrow, guilt, and tough realizations arose from these events, forcing us to stop, reflect, and realize the impact this had on our BIPOC communities.

A deep desire for change developed in many communities, including in our own little "Connexion" community. All of ConnexOntario took part in "Cultural and Sensitivity Training - How to Challenge Your Own Unconscious Biases" resulting in the creation of our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group, which views our policies and practices through this crucial lens.



### Lights, Action, Relocate!

In the midst of the first wave of the pandemic, our team saw even more change in the form of relocation. After having been in the Richmond Street office for 15 years, ConnexOntario moved into a brand new space.

The new office can be described as bright, airy, and fresh and represents another step in the right direction for the future development of the organization.

**Fun Fact: each of the 7 collaboration rooms in the office is named after parks in the London area.**

### Transitioning to Work-from-Home

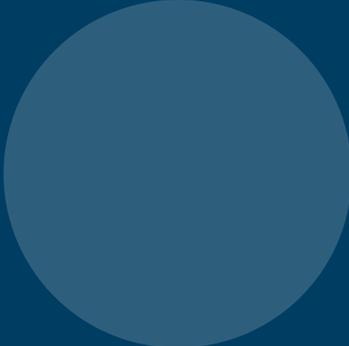
The team also saw another kind of relocation in the last year; remote work! We worked quickly to adapt to changing circumstances and to ensure safety and continuity for those unable to come into the office.





**"Offering information with warmth & understanding gives me hope that people might be able to continue on their journey with a little more confidence."**

- System Navigation & Information Specialist response to how working at ConnexOntario makes them feel.



# DPPM Recap

## Ministry Collaboration

Due to COVID-19, our Data, Product, and Project Management department implemented new processes to capture COVID-19 programming information. This information was used to inform the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders regarding changes in programming, the status of programs and services, contact statistics, and more.

ConnexOntario collaborated with the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence at Ontario Health to collect additional COVID-19 data and information relating to referral information and staff absences at Ontario's mental health and addiction organizations. This information is used to inform multiple steering committees and aids in decision-making.

**98%**  
Program  
Validation

**2 Hour**  
Average Data  
Request Turn  
Around



## IT Highlights

### Website Development

We're excited to announce the external public website was updated to achieve improved client usability, user interaction, and design. It is responsive for mobile devices and is available in French. Internally, our intranet platform the "GUAC" (Get Up and Connect ) has been implemented to increase organization engagement and to provide a centralized repository that allows easy access to a selection of apps, documents and procedures.

### Remote Work

Besides supporting the transition to remote work, our Information Technology team addressed the additional trouble-shooting and adjustments needed to enable a seamless work experience. Thanks to our monitoring software (Pulseway), IT is able to offer remote support to users that aren't in the office, and ensure a higher level of security and productivity overall. IT also implemented VMware infrastructure, an "under the hood" upgrade enabling us to be better prepared for future operating system versions.

**"The Be Safe app is a must have app for youth. It helps guide them through the process of reaching out, answers common questions about what to expect and helps create a safety plan. Amazing!"**



## mindyourmind

With the onset of the pandemic, mindyourmind needed to pivot its youth engagement process and move all of its youth programming to a virtual-online format.

The team was able to virtually facilitate four Design Lab cohorts working with over 50 young people across Canada to co-develop new mental health resources.

Additionally, a separate website was launched to highlight all the work we have been doing with the National Canada Service Corps project - available in English and French. Click here to see:

<https://youthexperts.ca/>  
<https://youthexperts.ca/fr>

## **Be Safe** by mindyourmind

### The Be Safe App

The Be Safe app version 2.0 was launched this past year, with improved functionality, content, and design updates. Expansion of the app also included every province and territory having a resource listing on the app. Learn more on the newly redesigned website for the Be Safe app here.

<https://besafeapp.ca/>

# A Message from Lorri Lowe, Executive Director

'Unprecedented' does not begin to describe the 2020-21 fiscal year. Not only were our lives completely turned upside down by the pandemic but it continues to be a rarity to have even one conversation that does not include some reference to COVID-19. Our daily vocabulary has expanded with other new words/phrases/meanings such as: social distancing, my bubble, lockdown, quarantine, anti-maskers, super-spreader, vaxxed, WFH, RTW, hybrid, pivot, new normal, next normal and languishing. And who could have foreseen that meetings in 2020-2021 would result in 'Zoom-fatigue' and with the most frequently spoken phrase at those meetings being "You're on mute".

Working on-site at our new location has presented a subdued and quiet vibe following the move to our new digs in May 2020. We were delighted to welcome the mindyourmind operations and staff into the space in March 2021. That said, the majority of the Connexion team were (and still are) working remotely and some have not yet seen the new space. Many of the remote workers who have endured isolation away from colleagues faced their own added challenges in maintaining the physical and mental health of themselves, and their families particularly as some were also tasked with homeschooling their children and sharing space with their partners who were also working from home.

The SNIS team understandably experienced a change in the nature and duration of the communications with their contacts. Supportive listening became a key component for many of the contacts while the Health Data Liaisons worked feverishly to ensure that the ever-changing program and services information was up-to-date.

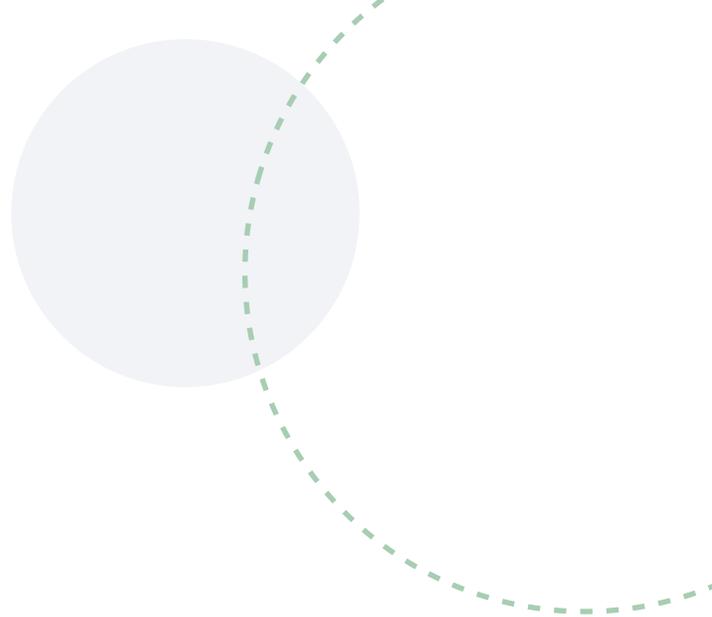
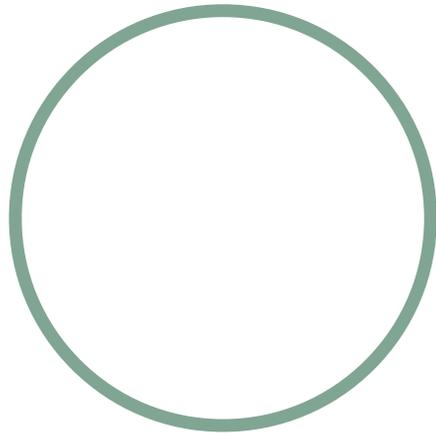
Innovation and quality product development stayed strong with specific enhancements to the ConnexOntario website and the mindyourmind Be Safe App version 2.0 was launched. The ConnexOntario brand was updated and our presence on various social media platforms is taking hold with a substantial increase in followers over this last year. This is exciting for our future with gains towards my personal vision for ConnexOntario to one day become a 'household' name.

January 2021 brought yet another impactful change at ConnexOntario as Brad Davey retired from his 15-year post as Executive Director and I was appointed to the position.

I could not be more proud of the resilience and continued dedication of the entire Connexion Team. They have truly demonstrated how to thrive while adapting through adversity. They remained focused and discovered new ways to collaborate and communicate with each other and with our stakeholders. They were engaged (even from afar) by attending department and Town Hall Zooms and continued to support each other through Slack, the instant messaging platform.

I want to thank every team member as they continue to demonstrate each and every day what I have shared from my own motto: "It's not about me, it's about Connex...and it's not about Connex, it's about the people, one connexion at a time."





## People & Culture

This year we launched our People and Culture Department! The focus has been on talent acquisition, streamlining internal policies and procedures, organizational workplace culture, and the wellbeing of all employees.



### Your Voice

We found a new way to engage our employees through a virtual mailbox called "YOUR VOICE." Employees are now able to anonymously express ideas, offer suggestions, and ask questions.

## glassdoor

4.1/5

### Glassdoor

A Glassdoor account was created, allowing employees to rate the organization based on pros, cons, and advice to management. Today we are rated 4.1/5 and 86% of employees posting on the site recommend the organization.

### Town Halls

As a way to stay connected, virtual staff Town Hall meetings were held providing staff the opportunity to receive timely and consistent information. Town Halls were recorded for those who couldn't attend live. Satisfaction surveys provided great feedback: a 68% response rate with 100% approval. These surveys have also allowed us to design future agendas/formats to ensure the sessions are a relevant and valuable use of staff time.

# Marketing and Communication Update



## Brand Refresh

2020-2021 saw another range of changes and updates to the ConnexOntario brand. A refreshed logo, including the newly named "Bubbly," incorporating subdued lines, calming colours, and a more androgynous appearance. This was then translated into our internal and external communication materials.

## Social Snapshot

**1,178,215**  
total impressions

**40% Increase**  
in Social Followers

**3177 Engagements**  
(Compared to Previous Year 164)

## Top Social Post

**Things Not To Say**

When Talking About Mental Health

Ontario Mental Health, Addiction and Problem Gambling Services  
1-866-531-2600 | www.connexontario.ca



## Mental Health Matters Campaign

A notable highlight from the marketing and communications team was the 10-page Mental Health Matters Campaign, which featured articles written by our very own SNIS team and published in over 20 newspapers across the province. This broadened the awareness of our services!

## Financial Review 2020-21

	CORE FUND	MIND YOUR MIND	TOTAL 2021	TOTAL 2020
<b>REVENUES</b>				
Core Programs	3,751,709	-	3,751,709	3,751,709
Time-Limited Initiatives/Projects	95,000	723,795	818,795	857,148
Less: Capital Purchases	-31,360	-	-31,360	-116,746
Add: Amortized Provincial Grants	63,322	-	63,322	64,170
Adjusted Operating Grants	3,878,671	723,795	4,602,466	4,556,281
Investment Income	1,752	-	1,752	7,299
Other	70,910	-	70,910	66,100
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>3,951,333</b>	<b>723,795</b>	<b>4,675,128</b>	<b>4,629,680</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Core-Funded Expenses	3,404,529	-	3,404,529	3,765,643
Time-Limited Initiatives/Project Expenses	40,860	616,877	657,737	755,838
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>3,445,389</b>	<b>616,877</b>	<b>4,062,266</b>	<b>4,521,481</b>
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenses	505,944	106,918	612,862	108,199
Fund Balance (Deficit), Beginning	203,552	110,399	313,951	205,752
Surplus to be Recovered by MOHLTC	-434,894	-82,856	-517,750	
2018 DAH deficit allocation	-2,448		-2,448	
<b>Fund Balances (Deficit), Ending</b>	<b>272,154</b>	<b>134,461</b>	<b>406,615</b>	<b>313,951</b>

## ConnexOntario Board of Directors 2020 | 2021

Thank you to our board who dedicate their time, energy and expertise towards making ConnexOntario the best it can be.

Sue Hillis (Chair)

Priya Paul (Secretary-Treasurer)

Harriet Ekperigin

Marcia Scarrow

Danielle Wilson

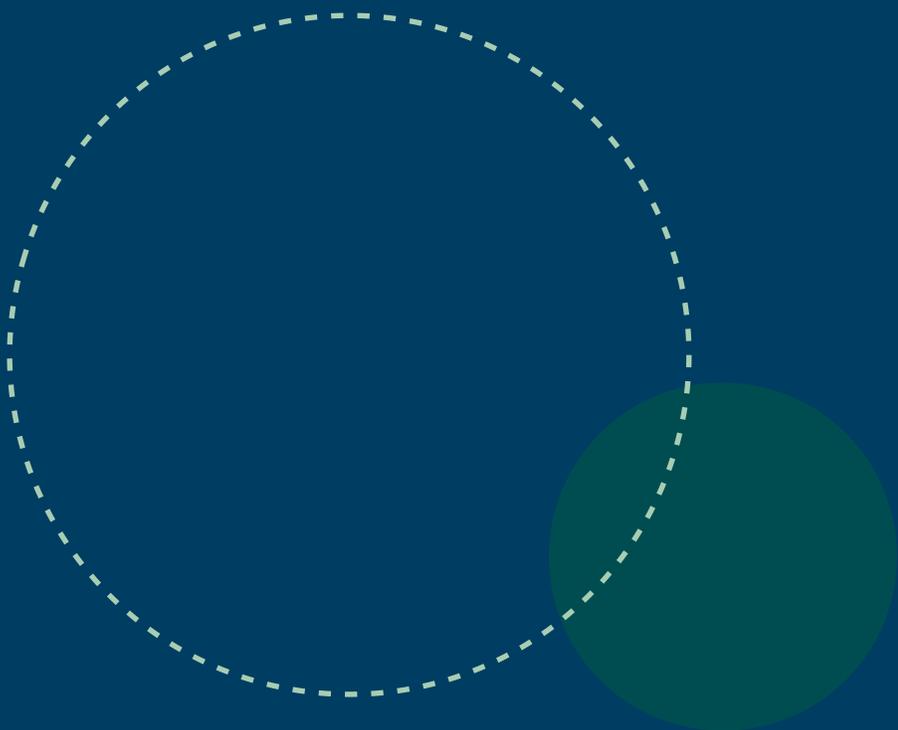
Sonja Grbevski (Vice Chair)

Aseefa Sarang (Member-at-Large)

Sylvie Guenther

Leighton Schreyer

Marion Wright



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Discover Mental Health, Addiction and Problem Gambling Services  
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