

Distress Centres Strategic Orientations and Initiatives

1. Ensure our services remain rooted in our communities.

- Recognize the significant impact the social determinants of health have on mental well-being and risk for suicide particularly across marginalized populations.
- Ensure our organization, at all levels, reflects the diversity of our community and promotes a climate of inclusion.
- Maintain our commitment to neighbourhood communities through our decentralized presence, our educational and face-to-face services, and our leadership in creating partnership and collaboration opportunities.
- Maintain stakeholder engagement by providing channels for feedback and dialogue.
- Continue to develop unique and targeted programs to specific vulnerable populations.

2. Provide leadership in the area of crisis response as it relates to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

- Enhance existing programs, and develop new, innovative programs to broaden our reach in crisis response to communities most in need.
- Share expertise and best practices in the area of crisis response as it relates to suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.
- Work in partnership with other organizations to maximize the impact of our suicide-related services.

3. Invest in our youth by ensuring our programs reach them in a meaningful and impactful fashion.

- Ensure our services respond to and reflect the needs of at-risk young adults, the “in between” generation.
- Utilize new technologies in developing youth appropriate and youth specific programs.
- Promote youth training/volunteering opportunities as a vehicle to enhance skills and experiences in support of long-term personal / professional growth and development.

4. Promote volunteerism as the service delivery model of choice¹.

- Create an environment, at all levels, which provide opportunities for engagement, growth and development of our valued volunteers.
- Promote Distress Centres volunteer programs as important community capacity building initiatives.
- Continue to upgrade our best-in-class training and continuing education programs to reflect increasing requirements and expectations.

5. Broaden our reach by taking a leadership role in the development and delivery of integrated distress centres services.

- Improve crisis response service delivery by recognizing the significant impact and benefits that a universally available, locally delivered national 1-800 crisis helpline will have to those most in need. Continue to work towards the development and implementation of that service.
- Work with like-minded organizations throughout Canada to identify opportunities for integrated crisis response systems and programs.
- Actively participate in knowledge exchange with organizations throughout Canada to promote best practices and support evidence-based research as it relates to helpline support services.

6. Continue to build the foundation necessary to ensure Distress Centres are well positioned for many years to come

- Ensure long-term financial health by committing to increase revenues year over year and by no less than 20% over the next three years to fund our new and existing programs and maintain appropriate reserves.
- Seek innovative ways of accessing resources, through fee for service partnerships, mobilization around specific projects and social entrepreneurship.
- Evolve our communication strategies, including augmenting our profile, with existing and potential funders.
- Commit to continued organizational excellence with strong governance principles and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of programs.

¹ Evidence based research has demonstrated that a volunteer service delivery model can provide a superior level of response by relating and interacting with individuals on a more empathetic, very personal, one-on-one level. Brian Mishara