



Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca

# Annual Report

2023–24



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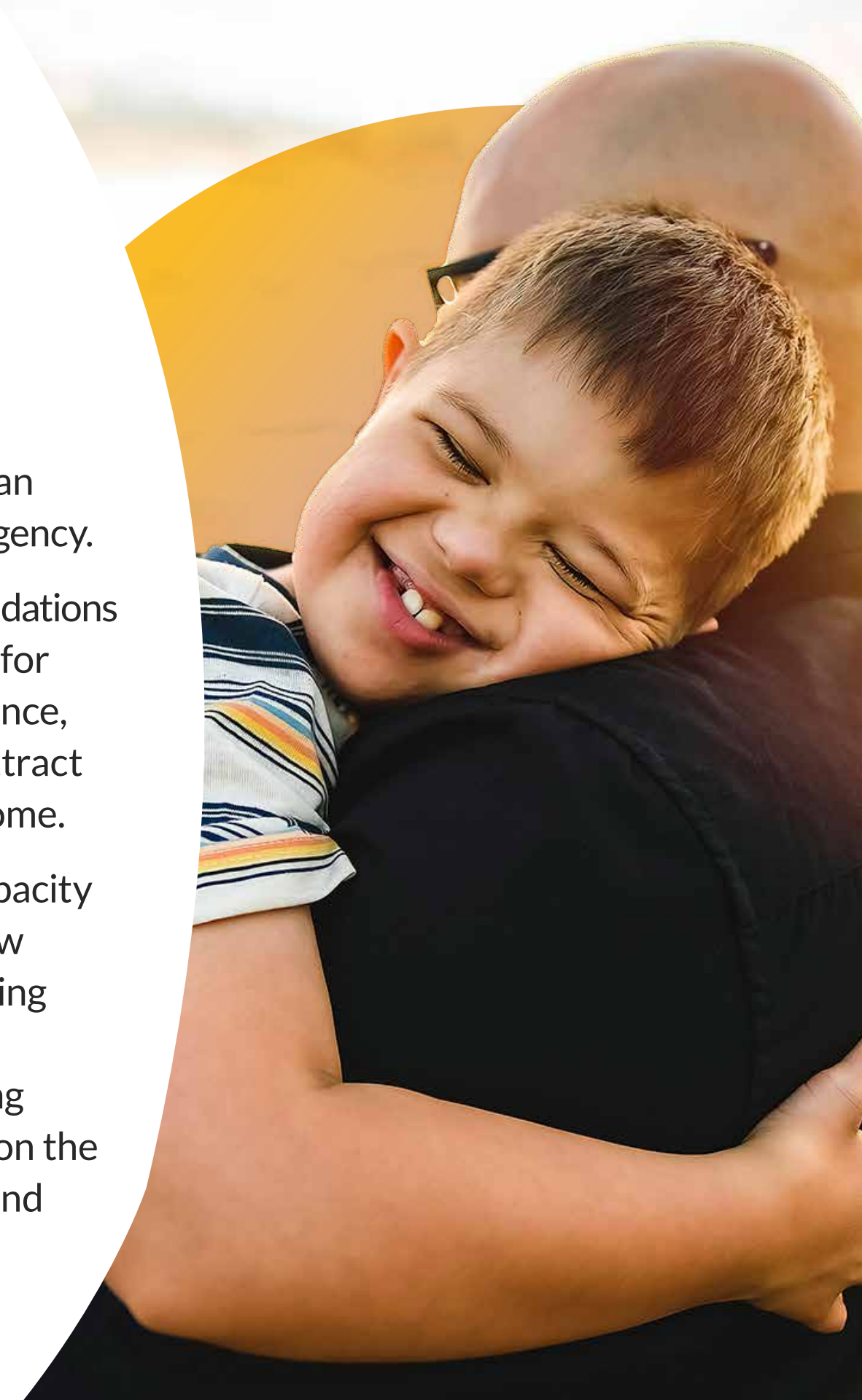
# Message from the President of the Board of Directors

Welcome to the 2023/24 Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca Annual Report.

The past year was another incredibly busy and productive year at Hands, a time marked by an amazing array of accomplishments and some key steps toward foundational growth for the Agency.

The Agency made important progress in its commitment to building strong and sustainable foundations including ensuring a quality workforce with a full review of the total compensation package for employees. The comprehensive review balanced fairness and competitiveness with compliance, affordability and accountability. As a result, there is a sustainable compensation model to attract and retain employees committed to helping clients, families and communities for years to come.

Hands also introduced a new structure and vision for corporate services, one that builds capacity to enhance the Agency's ability to provide excellent client services and experiences. The new structure will have the right people in the right job in corporate services to allow client-serving programs to focus on their core functions. It will also help maximize and diversify funding opportunities by supporting grants, leveraging community and corporate fundraising, finding efficiencies, and identifying new opportunities that align with our strategic plan. This focus on the corporate structure will translate into better experiences for clinical teams and the clients and families they serve and build a sustainable organization for years to come.





For me personally, in my first year as president of the Hands Board of Directors, it was a whirlwind of learning and opportunities to gain a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the impressive work the team at Hands accomplishes for the individuals and communities they serve. I'd like to thank my predecessor, Tonia Blenkarn, for her leadership and dedication in the role of Board President over the past two years, and her ever-present encouragement and kind assistance to me as her successor. Thank you also to the team of highly skilled, passionate and committed board members who work so hard and so diligently on behalf of the agency. I am fortunate to lead such a wonderful group of individuals.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I offer thanks to everyone at Hands for their commitment to excellence and continued dedication to their work on behalf of our clients, families and communities. Together we are accomplishing a tremendous amount of work to ensure a bright future and I look forward with great excitement as this wonderful agency continues its forward momentum.

**Dawn Lagesten**  
*President*  
*Board of Directors*





Highlights and Accomplishments

# Autism and Behavioural Services





## Autism and Behavioural Services

# Meeting the needs of families

Hands' **Caregiver Mediated Early Years** program exceeded all targets, supporting families with children aged 1 to 4 years through helping children learn new skills and meet their individualized goals. Hands succeeded in offering services with such efficiency and effectiveness that wait times were eliminated for families upon registration.

**Community Clinic Days** were offered in 10 different communities across Northern Ontario, bringing trainings, consultations, and resources to rural and remote communities. These clinics helped 35 families whose children have or may have Autism access the supports they needed in their own community.

Autism team members made four trips to the **James Bay Coast** to support families and local schools. These trips were an opportunity to provide education to caregivers and professionals and consultation on specific children who were experiencing an increased need.





## Autism and Behavioural Services

# Supporting unique children and families

In early 2024, a new Autism Services location was opened in Pembroke, Ontario, creating increased opportunities for the alignment of service delivery with **The Phoenix Centre**, a leading mental health treatment centre for children and youth age 17 and under.

This year, the Autism team successfully supported the transition of all legacy clients who were engaged in the former provincial Autism program into the new **Ontario Autism Program**. Many of these families had been working with Hands for more than five years, making this successful transition meaningful for clinicians as well as families and caregivers.

In 2023–24, Autism Services recruited and welcomed a new **Family Service Coordinator** position with an Indigenous focus and worked collaboratively with the **North Bay Indigenous Hub** to provide monthly clinic days, training opportunities, and access to resources. This important work helped ensure the necessary cultural supports were in place for all families as they journey on their own unique path to support.





## Autism and Behavioural Services

# Building and supporting the future

**The Psychology program** took significant steps to improve clinical services and client access while supporting the development of the psychology field.

In 2023, two existing programs, **Autism Developmental Services** and **Child and Youth Mental Health Psychology**, were blended into one psychology program, providing more streamlined services for clients and families as well as efficiencies for the Agency.

The addition of the Agency's first **Clinical Psychology Intern** expanded the range of services offered, providing additional support and expertise to clients. Offering an internship role also provided valuable hands-on experience and professional development for future clinical psychologists while contributing to the program's mission. The internship model created a pathway for future collaboration and recruitment while positioning the Agency as a key contributor to the development of the field of clinical psychology.



## Autism and Behavioural Services

# Building teams, knowledge and skills

The past year was a highly active time for Child Developmental Services.

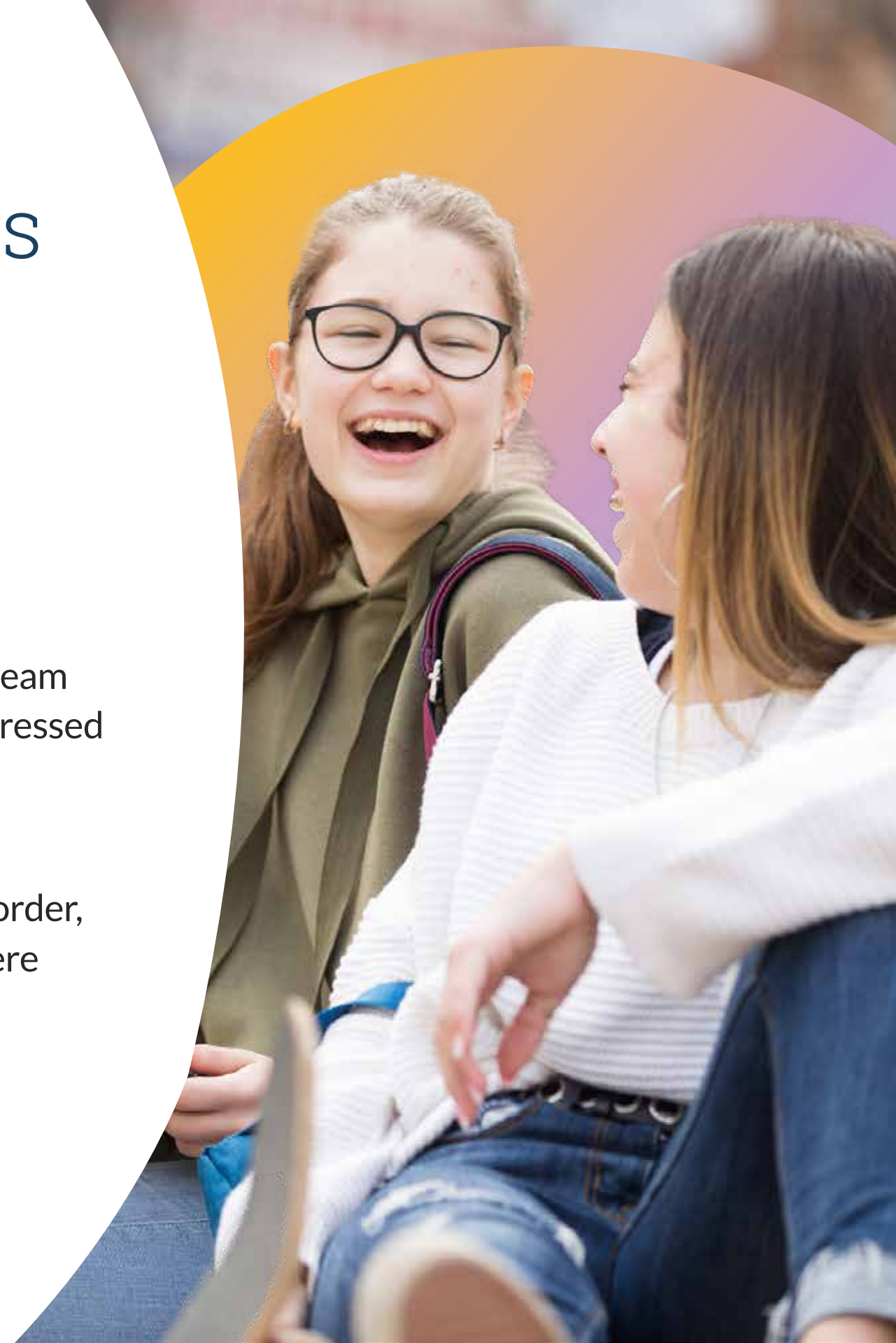
The team welcomed two new **Senior Therapists** and one new **Behaviour Therapist** vastly increasing the services provided to clients and families.

This team focused on unique and creative solutions to support clients and families.

The Hands team introduced a new model in which they worked with schools to identify appropriate peers to learn social skills in a group setting. This approach increased effectiveness and helped clients have fun while learning social boundaries. The Hands team also developed and led a teenage girls hygiene group within a local high school that addressed common needs for many families.

To build and strengthen their professional skills the team received training in Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, and Preschool Life Skills. This training is vitally important as in many cases, clinicians were working with families whose children had a wide variety of developmental needs.

In 2023, Hands' Child Developmental Services program received a **certificate for excellence** in delivering child developmental services in Parry Sound and Muskoka for the past 30 years from the Public Health Agency of Canada.





Highlights and Accomplishments

# Child and Youth Mental Health Services





## Child and Youth Mental Health Services

# Improving Access Providing Service Where and When it is Needed

**Child and Youth Mental Health services (CYMH)** demonstrated a commitment to innovation as teams, subject matter experts, and persons with lived experience worked together to revitalize the continuum of care from crisis services to live-in treatment services.

Using a creative, human-centred design approach, they successfully completed a comprehensive **Crisis Redesign**, guided by client and caregiver feedback, and input from key community partners. This new program will launch in 2024.

With a commitment to improving existing **Access and Intake** mechanisms, CYMH initiated three key components:

- Piloted an evidence-based triage tool with third-party referrals which accurately matched clients to their appropriate level of service;
- Participated in the launch of **One Stop Talk (OST)**, a provincial initiative, that provided immediate, virtual counselling sessions to youth, reducing waitlists across the province;
- Piloted the **Ocean E-Referral** system a province-wide Ministry of Health access mechanism which allowed e-referrals for clients requiring further service in our district.

*"Hands is a great organization and group of people who really care about helping our kids achieve wonderful growth in their lives."*

**Parent Testimonial**





# Enhancing Services

## Reinforcing our Intensive Care Continuum

After an extensive and collaborative process with input from clients, caregivers, staff, and community partners, Hands Live-in-Treatment Services redesigned both their clinical and staffing models, and officially changed their name to **The Lotus Youth Centre**. A symbol of rebirth and the ability to overcome adversity and challenges, the lotus flower is revered for its resilience and beauty, teaching us that mental health recovery can be beautiful. On March 13, 2024, the first client of the new program was discharged after completing the first full cycle of treatment of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT).

All CYMH division clinicians underwent an 18-month training process to develop a specialized intensive **Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Treatment Team** providing an innovative, four-tiered seamless service where clients and caregivers received highly skilled DBT intervention from a family-systems approach. All CYMH clinicians in the division also received DBT Essentials training in order to enhance our evidence-based clinical model. Hands invited community partners to join this training with the aim of improving partnerships, increasing consistency, and building community-wide capacity.

*"Thank you for taking feedback from community partners to set up and develop an effective crisis redesign service for our local children and youth."*

**Lana St. Louis, Mental Health Lead NNDSB**





# Building Capacity

## Celebrating our Team and Resources

In May 2023, the CYMH team held their first in-person gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary focus was to improve understanding of the mental health landscape and align strategies for the future. Leadership, frontline staff, and administrative support came together to engage in team building activities that incorporated the Agency mission, vision, and values. It included a thorough review of the CYMH vision and the 5–7-year roadmap towards a **community continuum of mental health care**. This provided the team with a clear sense of overarching goals and concrete next steps, as well as a feeling of energy and excitement to be making an incredible positive impact on the future.

In November, CYMH presented at the **Children's Mental Health Ontario Annual Conference** on the clinical redesign of the Lotus Youth Centre. Agencies were selected from across the province to highlight evidence-based practices, share knowledge and experiences, and build on collective efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth and caregivers.

In March, Hands engaged the services of **Capitalize4Kids (C4K)**, a Toronto-based community of financial service professionals who support children's mental health, to help CYMH develop operational dashboards in PowerBI, at no cost to the Agency. This resource has helped improve divisional systems and reporting requirements.

"The SNAP (Stop Now and Plan) treatment group program was very helpful to our family. We still refer to the skills we learned years ago."

Nipissing Family Testimonial





Child and Youth Mental Health Services

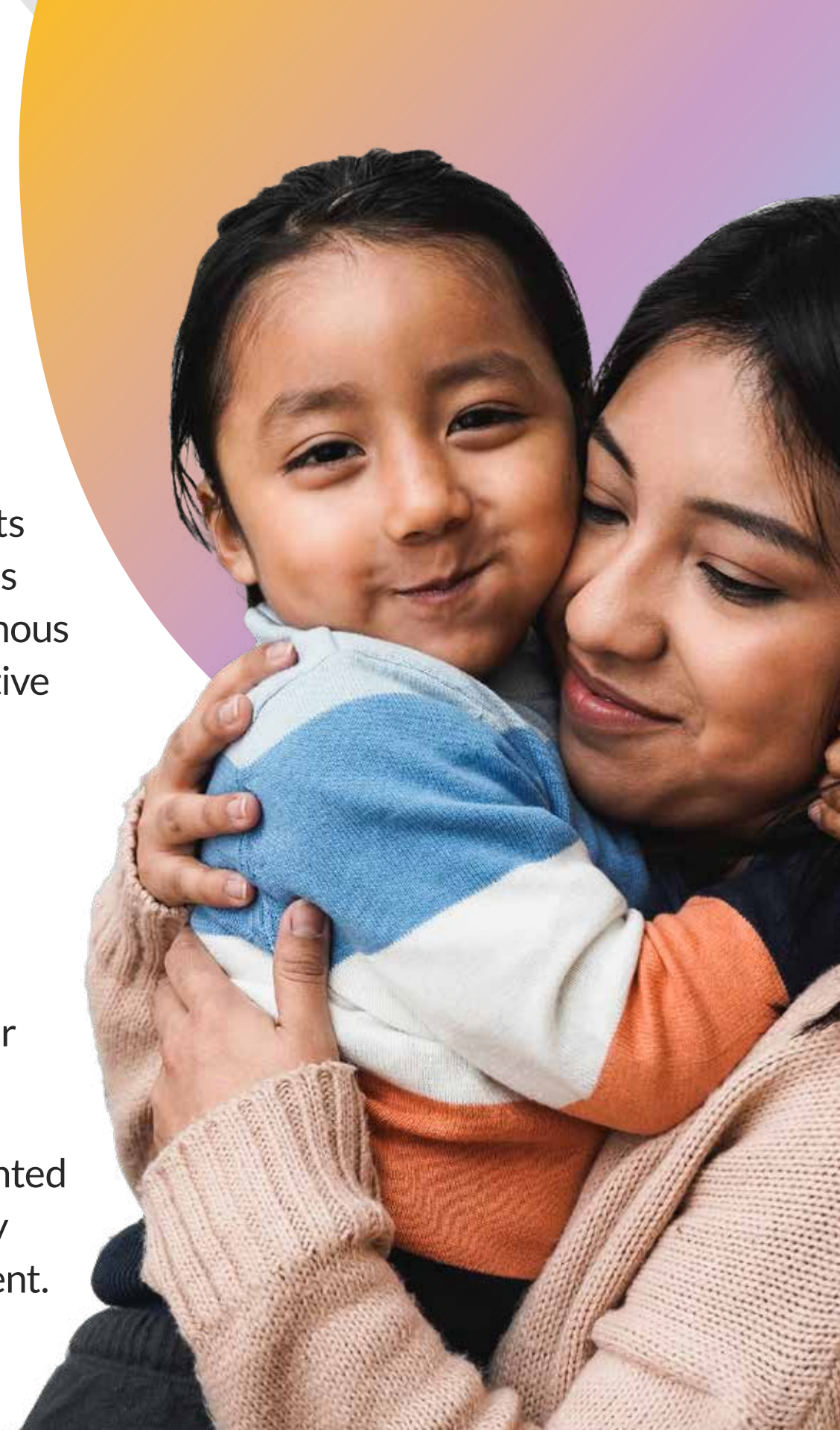
# Solidifying Partnerships

## Collaborating with Community

CYMH worked collaboratively with the **North Bay Indigenous Hub** to provide an Indigenous Child & Youth Worker (CYW) and offered culturally relevant services and mental health supports to youth and their families as a part of their primary care practice. The strength of the Indigenous Hub relationship has led to a secondary partnership within the crisis redesign project. An Indigenous CYMH Social Worker is working to co-design the crisis assessment from an Indigenous perspective and provide training for staff on providing culturally appropriate crisis intervention.

Hands was awarded a **Youth Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions Impact Grant** from Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) in partnership with Nipissing University, Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing (CCCNip), and the Canadian Mental Health Association. The aim is to offer addictions education to improve community service providers' ability to better meet the needs of youth with mental health, substance use, and addictions in our communities. CCCNip provided addictions/substance use training for Lotus Youth Centre staff.

Hands and the Canadian Mental Health Association, North Bay and District, were each presented with \$20,000 through **Bell's Community Fund** for local mental health projects. The ceremony took place at the North Bay Battalion hockey game as part of their Bell Let's Talk recognition event.





## Child and Youth Mental Health Services

# Authentic Engagement Working Together to Explore Creative Solutions

**Hands Youth Justice Programs** collaborated extensively with community justice partners. Staff shared updates, trends, and relevant statistics to promote our programs and elicit feedback from key local law-related audiences (e.g., crowns, probation services, OPP, indigenous partners) to plan for the best possible outcomes and experience for youth offenders and victims. The Youth Justice Committee Program and Youth Mental Health Court Worker Program worked closely with Hands clinical services to ensure clients were prioritized and services were completed within court deadlines.

Between November 1, 2022 and March 8, 2024, the **Northeast Child and Youth Case Resolution Committee** supported the needs of 25 children and youth through Service Resolution discussions and collaborated with more than 40 leaders from numerous organizations across our Districts and Regions. These **Coordinated Service Planning** discussions provided a supportive culture for partners to come together and pool their knowledge and skills. Through authentic engagement, partners worked through challenging situations to build comprehensive plans and explore creative solutions. Service Planning Coordinators shared that these discussions frequently resulted in improved relationships between family members and significantly minimized travel costs for caregivers.

“The opportunity to further develop our relationship with Hands through collaboration and partnership is truly appreciated. Through a shared vision the creation and redesign of programs across our service area allows the voice of our communities to be heard and to inform this important work. We appreciate the opportunity to build together, an equitable, effective and efficient Child & Youth Mental Health service delivery model to meet the needs of children, youth and families in Muskoka and surrounding areas.”

**Jocelyn Wing (she/her)**  
Manager of CYMH/CSP/YJC





A photograph of two men outdoors. On the left, a man with a beard and sunglasses, wearing a blue shirt and a dark cap, is sitting and looking towards the right. On the right, a man with a short haircut, wearing an orange t-shirt and blue shorts, is sitting in a wheelchair and laughing heartily. The wheelchair has a black frame with blue and green accents. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a paved path. A large, semi-transparent graphic overlay in shades of purple and blue is on the right side of the image, containing the text.

Highlights and Accomplishments

# Adult Services



## Adult Services

# PASSPORT

Passport is a reimbursement program helping adults with a developmental disability be involved in their community and live as independently as possible by providing funding that can be used to purchase services and supports for community participation, activities of daily living and person directed planning.

In the 2023–24 fiscal year, 2512 individuals benefited from the Passport Program in the Northeast Region alone. More than 74,000 invoices for admissible expenses were submitted and **more than \$13,000,000 was reimbursed** to clients.

The largest percentage of that funding, 67%, was utilized for staffing supports and expenses to assist individuals participating in activities of their choice, to support individuals in learning and acquiring skills to become more independent, and to provide respite for caregivers. Another 20% was used for accessing necessary transportation.

“The Passport program funding for community participation services and supports has changed everyday life for an individual that I support and his family. The individual is now able to participate actively in our community by volunteering for numerous events. With all these activities, the individual’s quality of life has improved. I have seen their mental health struggles slowly decrease and their joie de vivre return. Passport NER has alleviated an incredible amount of strain in the parents who are the individual’s primary care givers. As a support person I have seen the beautiful things that your program has given to this individual, the positive changes observed and felt due to your program are completely priceless! Thank you!”

Chantal Brousseau





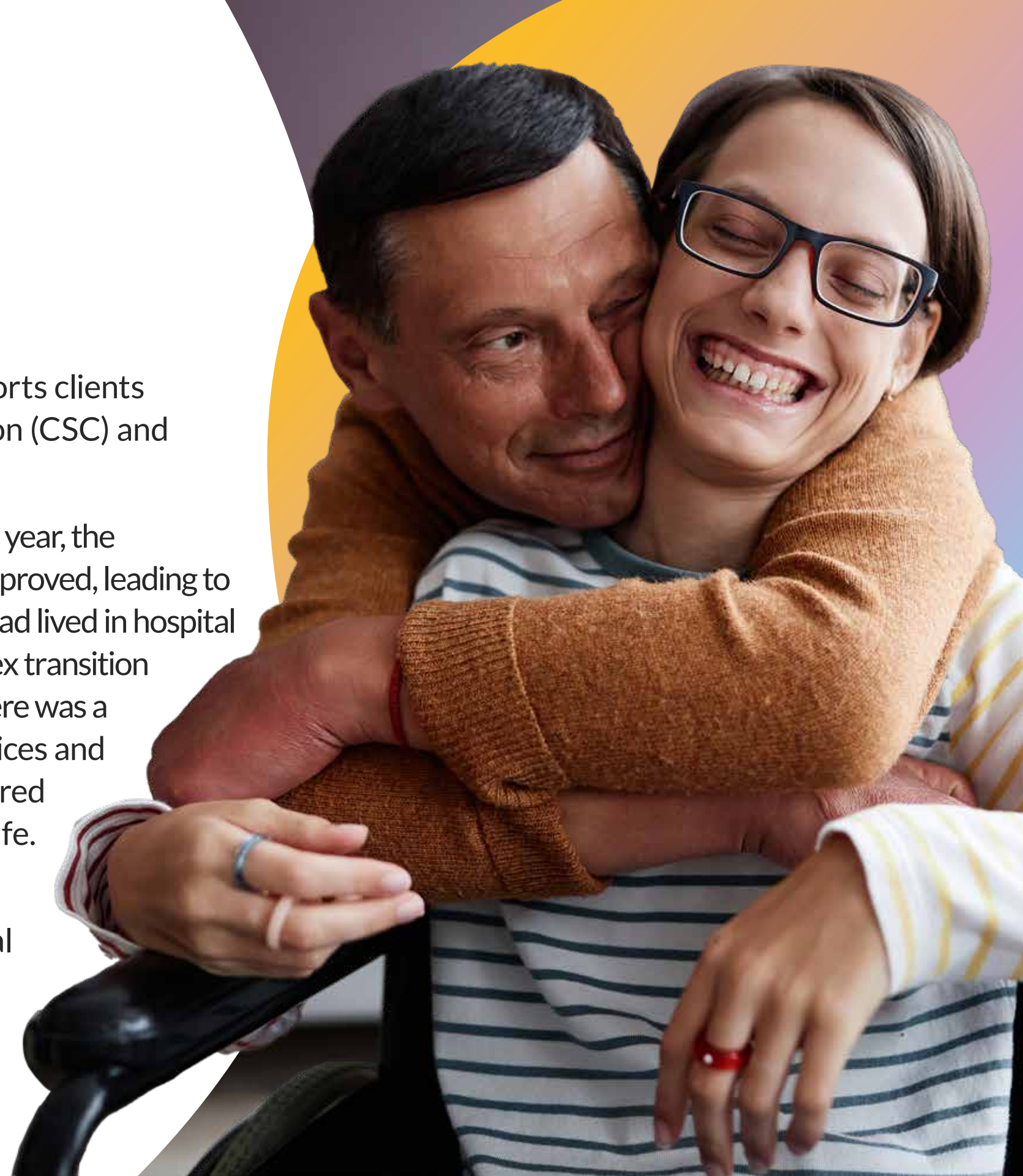
## Adult Services

# North Community Network of Specialized Care

The **North Community Network of Specialized Care (NCNSC)** supports clients through Health Care Facilitation (HCF), Complex Support Coordination (CSC) and Dual Diagnosis Justice Case Management (DDJCM).

The CSC supports clients with the most complex care needs. Over the past year, the relationships between the NCNSC and hospital teams in the North East improved, leading to improved client outcomes. For example, the team supported a client who had lived in hospital for years and was being transferred to a long-term care facility. This complex transition required collaboration with the facility and care partners to ensure that there was a complete circle of care including medical, continuation of Passport services and linking Developmental Services. This comprehensive coordination ensured continuity of care for the client during a significant transition in their life.

Additionally, the CSC team helped to facilitate and develop a partnership between community service providers and a local hospital to create a care plan to guide hospital employees when a particular client arrived in a crisis state to ensure the client received the treatment required and would not be discharged erroneously.





Adult Services

# Health Care Facilitator

## Improving Health Care For All

The introduction of a Health Care Facilitator role has positively impacted client outcomes. The new role served as the bridge between clients and the health care system to ensure that every person received the care and support they required. The Facilitator advocated for those who might struggle to navigate the complex health care system themselves. The Health Care Facilitator improved outcomes by improving access, increasing medication compliance and empowering individuals to take control of their own health. Additionally, they provided guidance, emotional support, and reassurance during difficult times.





## Adult Services

# Specialized Accommodations

Specialized Accommodations is a regional resource providing enhanced clinical and direct support services to address a clinical goal. In the past year, the process for receiving referrals and invoices was improved, resulting in immediate notification of referrals being received and approval notification for referring agencies. Collaborating agencies also now receive reminder communications, and can be provided real time summary reports and data. Every district in the North Region submitted at least one referral, with a total of 18 approved requests. The majority of requests for support were related to transition planning with clients, and 72% of those requests were for stabilization or implementation of new strategies.

“The most gratifying moments in my work are during phone calls with clients or their families. They are so appreciative of the work we do on their behalf and rarely hesitate to share their gratitude. For me the highlight is when a potential new DSO client calls and I can tell them how to begin the application process. As I share how we partner with them and walk shoulder to shoulder not only through their first days but well into the future you can hear the relief and appreciation in their voices. It feels so good to initiate that life changing experience with them.”

**Paula Darlington, Adult Services Administration**





## Adult Services

# Equitable Access Across the North

In 2023–24, Adult Clinical Services focused on improving equitable access to quality clinical services for clients residing across Northern Ontario. Engagement strategies with our eight clinical partnering agencies along with the development of tools to improve service access have resulted in a doubling of the number of referrals from our clinical partners. Online referral forms, simplifying access to the clinical service, website re-design, and media campaigns are some of the resources and strategies that have been most effective.

Wait times have been significantly reduced by streamlining clinical processes and ensuring that clients are offered the right service, in the right amount, at the right time. This means that clients can access responsive clinical services when they need them most. The current average waitlist for **1:1 clinical service is under 90 days from referral**, with immediate access to group offerings.

The group offerings have proven to be highly popular and effective. **More than 293 individual registrations** have been welcomed into the 13 different groups that are offered on a rotational schedule.





## Adult Services

# Information Management Leads

The Information Management (IM) Leads team supported the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in launching the latest version of the **Developmental Services Consolidated Information System (DSCIS)**. This updated version included a complete revision to system access with the implementation of Multifactor Authentication, and substantial changes throughout the system. IM-Leads provided critical pre- and post-implementation support including gathering requirements through various stakeholder forums, revising user guides, onboarding and engaging agencies in the change process, and supporting end-users to effectively adopt the new system. IM Leads have also launched a new user engagement forum for Service Agencies, which includes a significant amount of DSCIS users who previously did not have a forum for connecting and engaging. This new user-group facilitates opportunities for members to improve their use of DSCIS while also contributing to the ongoing improvement of the system.





A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a green tank top, holding a young child with brown hair and bangs, wearing a pink shirt. Both are laughing joyfully. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and trees. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple and blue gradient on the right side, where the text is located.

Hands [TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca](http://TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca)

# Services and Support Summary



# Child and Youth

Psychological Services	22/23	23/24
Specialized Assessments	–	45
Autism Diagnostic Assessments	44	33
Completed Screeners	–	51
Autism Services	22/23	23/24
Unique Families Served	850	1028
Direct Therapy Clients Served	203	199
Respite Applications	165	174
Clients served through School Support Program	–	51
Newly diagnosed families supported	–	92





Services and Support Summary

Child and Youth

Child Development Services	22/23	23/24
Developmental Support Services for Children – <i>Individuals Served</i>	52	49
Great Beginnings – <i>Individuals Served</i>	201	236
Infant and Child Development – <i>Individuals Served</i>	115	88
Child & Youth Mental Health – Core Services	22/23	23/24
Brief (Short-term Counseling), Counseling and Therapy and Crisis Support – <i>Services Provided</i>	1960	1966
Intensive Treatment Services (Home-based, Day Treatment Classrooms, and Child and Youth Mental Health Treatment Centre) – <i>Services Provided</i>	44	50
Specialized Consultation and Assessments (Psychology, Psychiatry) – <i>Services Provided</i>	123	91





Services and Support Summary

Child and Youth

Child & Youth Mental Health – Lead Services	22/23	23/24
Child and youth served by three core service providers in the service area of Muskoka, Nipissing, Parry Sound – <i>Services Provided</i>	3042	3341
Justice Services	22/23	23/24
Supervised Access Program – <i>Individuals Served</i>	27	27
Youth Justice Committee – <i>Individuals Served</i>	32	26
Youth Mental Health Court Worker – <i>Individuals Served</i>	42	29
Navigation Supports	22/23	23/24
Coordinated Service Planning – <i>Individuals Served</i> <i>Launched new model of service delivery with partnering agencies</i>	58	57
Tele-Mental Health Coordination – <i>Referrals</i>	1065	1106





Services and Support Summary

Adult

Adult Developmental Clinical Services	22/23	23/24
Muskoka/Parry Sound & North Region Program — <i>Individuals Served</i>	699	730
Community Services	22/23	23/24
<i>Development Services Ontario – North East Region (DSO - NER)</i>		
Intakes	236	252
Application Packages Completed	250	280
Matching and Linking to Appropriate Services	89	108
<i>Passport North East Region (Passport NER)</i>		
Individuals (Unique)	2538	2691
<i>North Community Network of Specilzed Care (NCNSC)</i>		
Individuals Served (Unique)	153	151
Complex Support Coordination (CSC)	75	70
Health Care Facilitation (HCF)	17	17
Dual Diagnosis Justice Case Management (DDJCM)	86	79

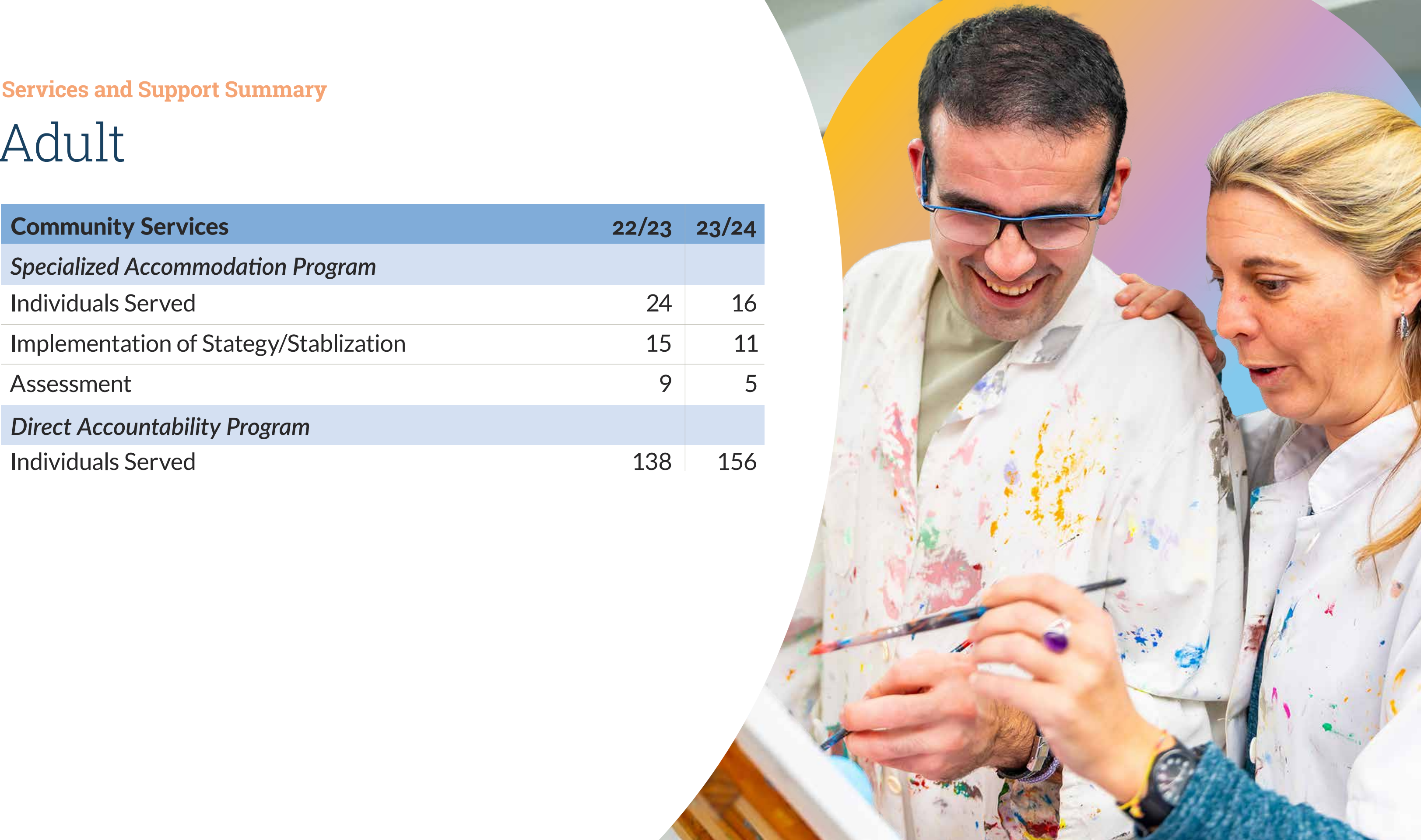




Services and Support Summary

Adult

Community Services	22/23	23/24
Specialized Accommodation Program		
Individuals Served	24	16
Implementation of Stategy/Stablization	15	11
Assessment	9	5
Direct Accountability Program		
Individuals Served	138	156





# Staff

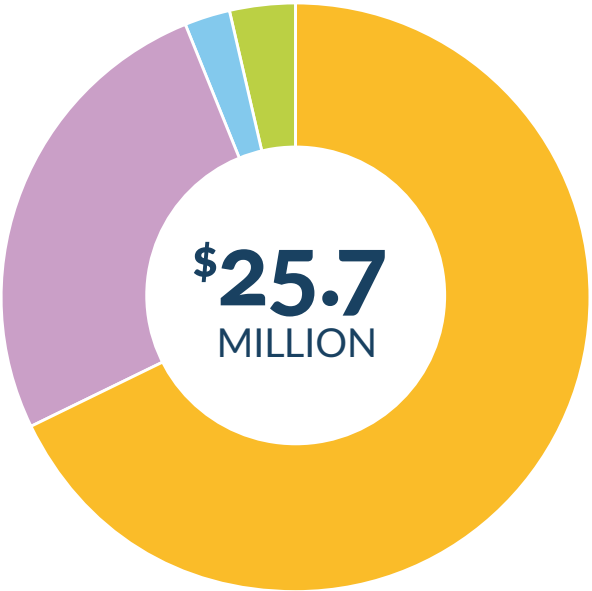
Staff	22/23	23/24
Number of Employees	240	214
<i>Casual/Relief</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Part-time</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Full-time</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>162</i>
Number of Bilingual Employees	62	53





# Financials

Revenues	22/23	23/24
Total	\$27.3 M	\$25.7 M
MCCSS	67%	68%
MOH	25%	26%
MAG, Health Canada, Justice Canada	2%	2.6%
Other	6%	3.4%



Expenses	22/23	23/24
Total	\$26.1 M	\$25.2 M
Salaries and Benefits	63%	62%
Transfer Payments	12%	12%
Pandemic	1%	5%
Professional Contracted Services	12%	9%
Occupancy	4%	4%
Other Expenses	8%	8%

