

StreetHealth

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010



Street Health works to improve the health and well being of homeless and underhoused individuals in southeast Toronto by addressing the social determinants of health through programs, services, education and advocacy.

A Message from the Board Chair

This last year has been eventful in the lives of many people in Toronto as the economy and governments shuddered to cope with the world financial crisis and heavy debt. Government funding at various levels has shifted priorities as a result of this new, financial strain. Economic rebalancing has resulted in job losses in many sectors and many of those affected are seeking assistance for the first time. Your support of the homeless community of Toronto continues to be vitally important.

2009-2010 has been eventful in the life of Street Health. We continue to provide innovative programs while remaining aligned with the priorities of the Toronto Central Local Health Integrated Network. For example, our recently launched, Crisis Outreach Services for Seniors Program, provides mobile crisis intervention and counselling to vulnerable seniors with mental health and addiction issues. Through this, we have furthered our goal of collaborating with other social service providers. We have also increased our focus on evaluation of our programs to ensure our service addresses the homeless problems in our community in a quality way. Most importantly, we have strengthened our work force in signing a collective agreement and enhancing democratic process.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank all those who continue to make Street Health relevant, important and effective for the population we serve. Our dedicated staff, our volunteers, our donors and our community partners are critical in our goal of serving the homeless in downtown Toronto.



A Message from the Executive Director

2009-10 marked my 15th year at Street Health and it has caused me to reflect on how far we have come as an organization serving people in need. In 1995, our entire staff of 6 people occupied one office in the basement of a local church – today 21 staff fill a two storey house! By adding more programs and enthusiastic staff to Street Health's wide array of services, we have most certainly made a positive contribution to those who are homeless and living in Toronto. I can truthfully say that Street Health has evolved into one of the most responsive and credible organizations in the city, and for that I am extremely proud.

2009-10 was also a year of hard work and long hours for the members of our Board of Directors. I congratulate them on their commitment to Street Health's vision and for their remarkable volunteerism. I very much look forward to working with staff, board, volunteers and the members of our community in 2010-11.



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OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Nursing Program

Staff nurses work with volunteer RNs and NPs to operate scheduled clinics in drop-in centres and shelters. In addition, nursing outreach is designed to locate people living on the street who generally avoid mainstream services. The nurses advocate for clients on an individual basis and challenge systemic barriers which prevent every person's right to appropriate, accessible and timely health care despite their individual circumstances. Mentoring of nursing students and other health care related disciplines, and conducting public education, are important components of our program. In the fall of 2009 Street Health participated in the pandemic planning for H1N1 and conducted staff training at several shelters and drop-in centres. Rigorous protocols were established on site, and as a result we were very prepared for the potential of a severe flu outbreak. Our nursing records are going online for the first time! CAISI (Client Access to Integrated Services and Information), an open-source online database, will allow nurses to keep track of client health information and histories more efficiently than ever before.



Community Mental Health Program

Street Health's community mental health program provides support for people who are homeless or underhoused and experiencing mental health issues. The Community Mental Health Workers assist people in trying to access basic needs such as shelter and housing, income, health care, and ID, which are fundamental determinants of health. Other support includes crisis intervention, outreach, informal counselling, and legal support as well as facilitating access to other community resources. The program also focuses on advocating for individual clients as well as addressing systemically on issues of poverty, homelessness, and human rights. Partnerships with neighbouring service providers continue to be an important part of the Mental Health Program. We provide case support at the Fred Victor Centre and the Good Neighbours Club. Our team is very involved in the community, lending their expertise to such initiatives as Shelter for Sanctuary (nooneillegal.org), and the Garden Group at Fred Victor Centre.

Crisis Outreach Services for Seniors (COSS) NEW***

The COSS project is aimed at providing mobile crisis intervention and outreach to seniors (65+) who are not connected to services in high priority neighbourhoods. The program provides comprehensive care in the community, homes, drop-ins, and community centres. COSS offers on-call, 7 day-a-week mobile crisis intervention and outreach service focused on seniors who have mental illness and/or addictions in the south-east area of Toronto. In partner-

ship with COPA, South Riverdale Community Centre, the Good Neighbours' Club, and WoodGreen Community Services, this program has diverted 31 emergency room visits since beginning in the fall of 2009. COSS is currently serving 88 clients, and the team has made over 700 outreach visits to date. The team has exceeded their required target in order to secure funding for the next fiscal year (2010-2011).



The Safer Stroll Project NEW***

Safer Stroll peer outreach and educational program is aimed at breaking down barriers sex-working women face when accessing health and social services. The program provides educational workshops on topics such as self defence and healthy lifestyle choices. The project furthers the development of stronger peer led networks for sex workers. Sex workers who access our peer led services tell us they have optimism from being mentored by their peers.

Harm Reduction Program

The street outreach team provides clients with referrals and peer support related to the harms associated with substance use. The program includes needle distribution, safer crack kit distribution, street outreach service, and support for sex workers. We have regular participation of 15 peer workers in our street outreach and kit distribution programs. Our ongoing peer training provided education on topics such as mental health and wellness and anti-racism. The training assists our peer workers in further developing skills and knowledge, continuing to make our peer work accessible and effective.



The Crack Users Project (CUP)

The Crack Users Project continues to be the Toronto's only program aimed at reducing the harms associated with the use of crack cocaine. The project includes three weekly drop-ins, a health-care clinic with a Nurse Practitioner, housing help, a Community Support Worker, and peer training opportunities. CUP continues to provide coordinated services to individuals who use substances and who may not otherwise access supports and medical care. Regent Park Community Health Centre and Street Health work collaboratively to promote these services and we continue to see the number of participants grow. CUP is an excellent example of a harm reduction program that leads to positive health outcomes.

I.D. Replacement - Access to Health Cards for the Homeless

Street Health's *Access to Health Cards* program was established to assist homeless people with the onerous task of applying for health cards and the other personal identification they need to access health and social services. Last year, the *Access to Health Cards* program completed an average of 300 applications for ID per month.

ID Safe

Homeless and under-housed individuals can easily lose their identification due to unstable living conditions. The *ID Safe* program at Street Health offers security for homeless people by storing their important identification documents, helping them to maintain access to services which require proof of identification. Approximately 550 people currently keep their identification safe with Street Health.

Research

This past year, Street Health has focused our research efforts on evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs and services. Through a series of surveys and focus groups, Street Health is ensuring that our services are meeting the needs of our clients in the most appropriate way. In addition, we are fostering our community academic partnerships through a collaborative H1N1 study with the Faculty of Education at York University. Research at Street Health continues to be a valuable source of information and a tool for advocacy for Street Health and for other community agencies and coalitions working to address issues of homelessness.

Community Health Promotion

Street Health has been involved in a number of initiatives over the past year that address poverty and homelessness including: the proposed Hunger Inquiry – an investigation into the hunger issues and food shortages within the GTA; activities related to the Recession Relief Coalition; and a new initiative aimed at securing lower TTC rates for low income people living in Toronto.

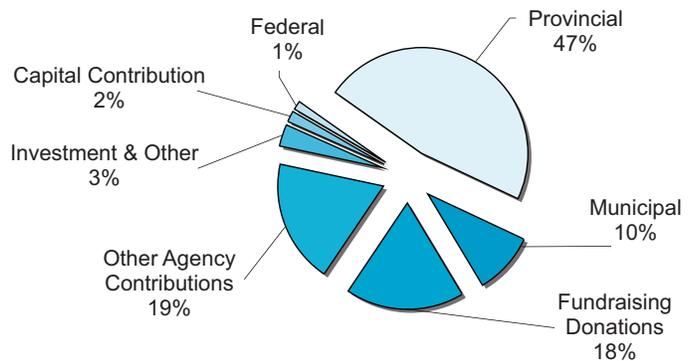
Mail Service

Homeless people by definition lack the postal address required to qualify for certain services. Street Health will provide a mailing address and handle a person's mail.

Fundraising 2009-2010

2009-2010 proved to be a successful year for Street Health's annual fundraising campaigns, despite the economic decline. The fundraising team managed to exceed their target by over 20%! We continued to strengthen existing relationships, fostered new funding opportunities, and increased overall participation in all our fundraising efforts. Development planning at Street Health allows our existing programs to flourish, makes possible new initiatives, and ensures long-term organizational growth. If you are interested in hearing more about our efforts, please contact us at (416) 921-8668 extension 229 or by email at info@streethealth.ca! On behalf of all of us at Street Health, thank you for answering our call for help!

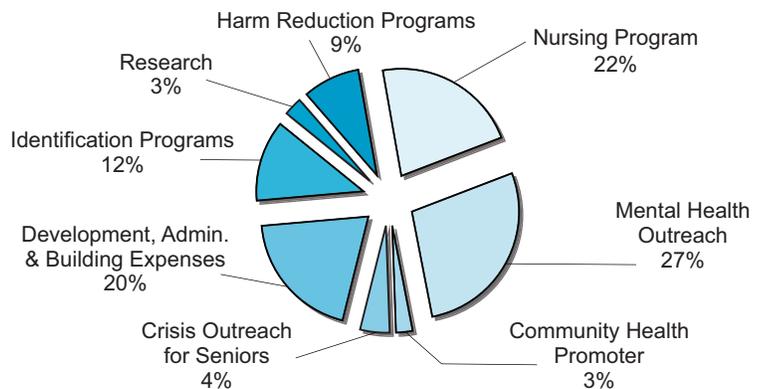
Street Health Revenue 2009-2010



Finance

Street Health is a fiscally responsible organization. Each dollar is carefully accounted for to ensure that we are providing the highest level of support and services possible to our clients, as well as enables Street Health to be a sustainable organization. We have some stable core funding, however, donations and grants allow us to add new and innovative services for our homeless clients, while continuing to provide high quality care.

Program Expenditures 2009-2010



ACCESS TO HEALTH CARDS FOR THE HOMELESS

One of the biggest challenges in the homeless community is obtaining and keeping identification documents. In the shelter system and on the street where theft is not uncommon, a person is vulnerable to having their identification stolen. Identification is necessary to access basic services including health care, welfare, food banks, housing and employment. Almost from the beginning, Street Health nurses had been assisting clients to replace their lost or stolen health cards and other identification documents. However, it wasn't until 1999 that the Access to Health Cards for the Homeless (Access) program was funded allowing for a more stable and sustainable service for homeless people in Toronto.

Myra Piercy and Lennox Holford currently staff the Access program and together they operate a total of nine ID clinics per month in various drop-in centres across Toronto. Tracking down certain pieces of ID for their clients can often be a challenge and may require a significant amount of detective work into a person's past. Since many of their clients experience mental illness or addiction issues, this often makes their personal memory unreliable. As well, some people are estranged from their families or they may have grown up in child protective services, making tracking down original documents even more difficult.



The majority of those people who visit a Street Health ID clinic have no identification whatsoever, therefore applying for a birth certificate or proof of legal status in Canada is the first step in the process. Usually within 4-8 weeks, the documents are mailed to Street Health and distributed through our on-site mail service. With this necessary document in hand the team can begin the task of obtaining other forms of ID for the client, such as a Health Card and Social Insurance Card.

"I recently had 75 year old client who had never had a birth certificate in his life", recalls Access team member, Lennox. "He grew up in a group home in Nova Scotia and

left for Ontario at an early age. After more than two years of looking into his past including contacting the Children's Aid Society in Nova Scotia, we located his birth records. To everyone's surprise the client was actually 5 years older than he thought, and he had been spelling his last name incorrectly his whole life! We were finally able to begin the process of applying for his ID and we gave him back some of his personal history".

The Access team plays a unique roll in people's lives. There is tremendous feeling of accomplishment when a set of complicated circumstances is resolved and the client is finally handed their ID. On one such occasion, a woman arrived at an ID clinic a week after immigrating from Turkey with Landed Immigrant status. She was 6 months pregnant, had very little money, and was in need of emergency medical care. Through much perseverance and with the help of a local M.P.P. Myra was able to secure an approved health card for her client. In a thank you note to Myra the woman wrote:

"It is really hard to find the proper words to thank you, you may remember how hopeless and desperate I was the day I met you. I had never thought that would be my lucky day. Because of you, you gave me hope and did the impossible to help me and my baby!"

The team has many other stories such as this in which they were able to help those in need, obtain their essential identification and subsequently, vital services.

The Access to Health Cards program is carried out in partnership with the All Saints Church Drop In, Regent Park Community Health Centre, Queen West Community Health Centre, and Parkdale Community Health Centre and is funded by the Toronto Central Local Health Integrated Network.

*"The **Street Health** commitment goes beyond applying a bandage; it is a commitment to aiding a person in any way possible. The staff at Street Health not only provide health care, but they also educate and build lasting relationships based on trust and compassion."*

- Laura Cowan, Executive Director

CRISIS OUTREACH SERVICES FOR SENIORS

Poverty and homelessness in the elderly population is a huge issue in the city of Toronto. The *Street Health Report 2007* found that of a sample of 368 homeless people interviewed, 20% were senior citizens. However, estimating the number of homeless elderly is a great challenge. Seniors seem to be consistently under-represented in most of the studies of people who are living in poverty; this is felt to be due to higher mortality rates. It is certain that the number of elderly people who are homeless and marginalized is growing (Stergiopoulos & Herrmann; 2003).

Seniors living in shelters, on the street and in low income housing projects are more likely to be victims of abuse and neglect. Illnesses left untreated become even more debilitating in an aging person. Dietary concerns and malnutrition can lead to serious health issues. Mental illness is very common in this group. It has become clear that this population needs specified support.

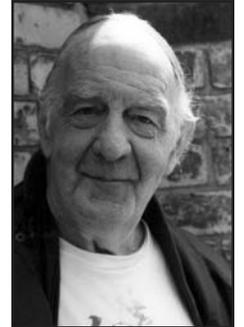
Crisis Outreach Service for Seniors, or the "COSS" Project provides on call, 7-day-per-week mobile crisis intervention and outreach to seniors who are not connected to services in South East Toronto and who have some form of mental health or substance abuse issue. The project provides comprehensive care in homes, drop-ins, shelters, and community centres. In partnership with WoodGreen Community Services, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, Good Neighbours Club, and COPA – the COSS

Project provides acute case management service to the aging homeless and under housed population.

Once an initial contact is made with a client, a 6 week intervention process begins, involving, education, referrals to community supports in the neighborhood, advocacy, and nursing and mental health care and counseling. Of the clients who are housed, many are in danger of eviction and the COSS team has been able to intervene on their behalf to ensure that housing is not lost and the appropriate level of support is present.

Since the project began in the fall of 2009, the COSS team has provided services to over 82 clients, and has conducted 700+ outreach visits. As a result, the number of emergency room visits by these clients had decreased significantly, and in some cases, the COSS team was able to respond to a client's need in lieu of a 911 response vehicle.

The COSS project has already exceeded their 2009-2010 goals which were required to secure funding from the Provincial Government in 2010-2011. Congratulations COSS team on all your hard work to aid this especially vulnerable group within the homeless population!



YES, I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT STREET HEALTH'S NURSING OUTREACH PROGRAM

I want to help provide vital services for those people living on the street. Enclosed is my donation of:

\$35 \$50 \$80 \$100 \$250 I would prefer to give \$ _____

My payment preference is:

Cheque enclosed (please make payable to STREET HEALTH)

MASTERCARD # _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

VISA # _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code _____

Donations of \$100 or more *or* joining our monthly giving program will entitle you to a complimentary copy of *The Street Health Report*.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME PART OF THE STREET HEALTH FAMILY!

Please process my monthly donation for:

\$20 \$35 \$50 \$100 I would prefer to give \$ _____

Master Card # _____ VisaCard # _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

If you would prefer to have your donation debited from your bank account on a monthly basis, please include a blank cheque marked "VOID" with this donor coupon. All banking information is kept confidential.

Please detach this coupon and send with your donation.

All donations are tax deductible.

Charitable Registration # 11920-0541-RR0001

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