

Virtual Counselling Proven Key to the Mental Health of Thousands During Pandemic

CALGARY, March 17, 2021 – The 16th of March marks the one year anniversary of Calgary’s initial lockdown due to COVID-19. Many have been significantly impacted since the pandemic started, and virtual counselling proved to be key in supporting Calgarians develop resiliency through these uncertain times.

Over a period of 36 hours, Calgary Counselling Centre (CCC) shifted from in-person to virtual counselling services.. Since then, CCC has supported over 12,000 clients with over 43,000¹ hours of virtual counselling and group programs. Feedback from clients has been overwhelmingly positive and client results confirm that virtual counselling works as well as in-person care.

During the pandemic, clients presented with higher levels of distress than previous years. However, through online counselling, clients experienced a greater reduction in distress.²

“When we began virtual counselling we expected clients would do well but there were no studies to tell us whether client results would be the same, better, or worse than in person counselling,” says Dr. Robbie Babins-Wagner, CEO of Calgary Counselling Centre. “Our outcome data tells us that client results were at minimum the same as with in person care and in fact were better than with in person counselling.”

CCC data shows that online counselling sessions during the pandemic resulted in significantly better outcomes than in-person counselling in the year before the pandemic . It also showed that client levels of mental health distress were significantly higher at the start of counselling and came down to levels similar to those pre-pandemic times. Overall, client outcomes surpassed published outcomes by 39 per cent and the 2019 pre-pandemic results by 7.3 per cent.

Since March 16th, the top five reasons Calgarians sought counselling at CCC were anxiety, depression and stress, followed by relationship issues (couples and family). The biggest change is the increase in the number of people seeking counselling for anxiety which saw an increase of 19 per cent this past year.

The COVID pandemic also took a financial toll on many Calgarians which played a part in their mental health. During COVID in 2020, 13.7 per cent of CCC clients were unemployed compared to 8.6 per cent in the same time period in 2019. The number of clients at the lowest level of income grew the most – from 29.2 percent in 2019 to 41.5 per cent in 2020.

The effects of COVID have been deep and widespread for many Calgarians, but the good news is that counselling can significantly help people find their bearings, cope with the changes and better prepare for the future. CCC continues to serve the community through remote counselling with no wait list and no financial barriers.

About Calgary Counselling Centre:

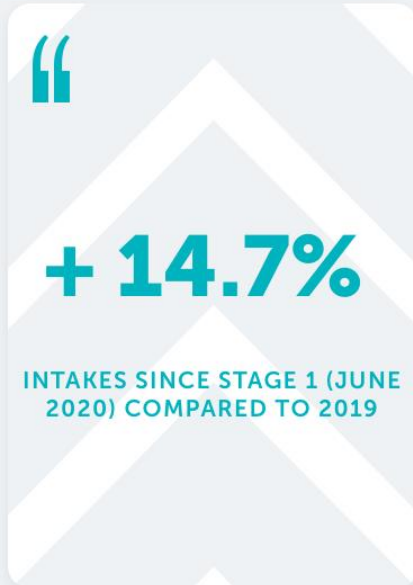
Since 1962, Calgary Counselling Centre has been providing the most effective counselling services with the highest client results in the industry. As the preeminent research, training and knowledge-based counselling organization in Canada, The Centre offers counselling to all age groups in a variety of areas including depression, children’s programs, domestic abuse,

¹ March 16, 2020 - February 28, 2021 43,428 hours of counselling

² CCC measures client progress through counselling with a tool called an Outcome Questionnaire. The Outcome Questionnaire consists of 45 questions that assess a client’s level of mental health distress at every session and is completed before each session.

eating disorders, separation/divorce, trauma and self-esteem. Through ongoing research and education programs, Calgary Counselling Centre is committed to meeting the changing needs of our community.

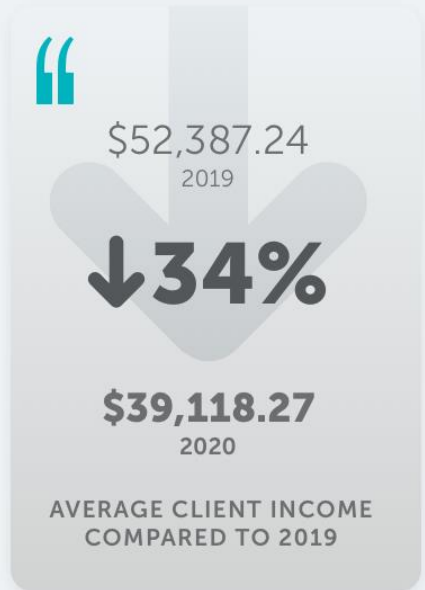
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Effects of COVID-19



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- ### TOP FIVE REASONS FOR COUNSELLING IN 2020
- 1 ANXIETY (+19% COMPARED TO 2019)
 - 2 DEPRESSION
 - 3 STRESS
 - 4 COUPLE/MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS
 - 5 SELF-ESTEEM

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