



Laurencrest Youth Services Inc.

510, AVENUE MERCIER AVENUE,
CORNWALL (ONTARIO) K6K 1K2
TEL. / TÉL.: 613-933-6362 • FAX / TÉLÉCOPIEUR: 613-936-2533

Good Afternoon,

This year marks our 52nd year of helping youth in our community recognize and embrace their potential. Since our humble beginnings residentially we have been privileged to work with 2,505 youth with over 237,646 days of care. Our community based programs saw 9,069 youth served while our adult diversion and community service program worked with 979 adults. It goes without saying how we have directly and indirectly impacted the lives of so many.

Residentially our youth justice numbers in 2019-2020 were low. Our open detention/open custody referrals were 12% overall. This however is in line with provincial trends. Across the province open detention and open custody placements are at 13% utilization while secure custody is 38%. Our two Children's Mental Health beds saw 696 days of care resulting in a 95% occupancy rate. Local demands for this service are consistent year after year generating a wait-list for placement. Our three fee for service beds included 977 days of care for an 89% occupancy rate. Referred youth generally have significant behavioural and mental health issues resulting in high acuity therefore placing significant demands on staff capacity to meet their needs. We go above and beyond the call of duty to make these situations work for the young person involved. Across all residential programs our overall occupancy rate was 42%.

Without getting into specific breakdown of numbers for our community-based programs we assisted 507 youth and their families along with 261 adults in our adult programs. We value our partnership with the Upper Canada District School Board. This year our school programs helped students achieve over 75 credits. We are very proud of students and staff for such a high level of success!

Within the past year our staffing compliment has remained fairly consistent. We had some of our long standing part-time staff move on to other full-time employment. On April 30, 2020 Lise Wattie our Administrative Assistant for the past 30.5 years retired. We wish her all the best and thank her for her dedicated service. She will be missed. We welcomed however Lisa Granger our new Admin Assistant. We look forward to a long and productive relationship. Two of our full-



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time staff, Phil Marleau and Joel Amelotte, will be celebrating 20 years of service with us in September. We are privileged to have them as part of the Laurencrest team. We appreciate all of their hard work and focus on helping others.

I would like to take this opportunity to make some general observations about the young people we serve. Residentially our initial task is to stabilize and allow the young person to transition to an environment that mixes accountability with caring and professional interactions. This remains a challenging task as so many kids are struggling in this era of fast paced, instant gratification and invasive communication. Exposure to the stressors this entail is beginning at a much younger age and therefore for some childhood takes on a different feel. It is entangled with being a kid and complicated by ever present adult themes. The dysfunction in our adult world is in their face daily. Racism, our current pandemic, world violence, political tyranny, numerous injustices highlighted on social media... the world just seems to be such an angry place. Processing this information on the basis of safety and security is more and more difficult to manage. Parents are in most cases ill equipped to meet the *boogie man* that now denotes our teens. The references we fall back on from our childhood are not in the realm of reality for kids today. We cannot relate and youth know that. They view our intrusion into their daily existence as predatory. What do we want and why? What are our motives? Can we be trusted? More importantly can we meet their immediate needs? If not what purpose do we serve? Youth well entrenched in a solid family bubble, both immediate and extended, have much more chance of mitigating risk associated with adolescence. For the vast majority of youth we deal with both residentially and in our community based programs the true meaning of family is lost. There are few visceral heroes and mentors in their lives. The constant pressure to fit in is eroding what is at the core of being a child today. Less physical activity coupled with heightened stress levels is a receipt for disaster. The body and mind are never in balance with the grenade in the room being mental health. This is manifested as either a delayed fuse or an explosive event.



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I would like to take a moment to highlight some of Ontario's statistics:

Prevalence:

- 36% of Ontario parents have sought help for their child; of those who did, 4 in 10 didn't receive the help they needed or are still waiting for treatment.
- Half of Ontario parents who have sought mental health help for their child said they have faced challenges in getting the services they needed. The primary reason cited was long wait times, services don't offer what my child needs, don't know where to go and don't offer services where they live.
- 76% families surveyed indicated it was very or extremely difficult to know where to find help.
- 63% of youth point to stigma as the most likely reason to not seek help.
- Poor transitions from youth to adult mental health services lead to disengaging from care in up to 60% of known cases.

Challenges with the current system:

- 1/2 of Ontario parents report having concerns about their child's level of anxiety.
- 1/3 of Ontario parents have had a child miss school due to anxiety.
- 1/4 of Ontario parents have missed work to care for a child with anxiety.
- 32% of Ontario youth, only 3 in 10, have spoken to a mental health care professional about their anxiety.
- As many as 1 in 5 children and youth in Ontario will experience some form of mental health problem.
- 5 out of 6 of those kids will not receive the treatment they need.
- 70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence.
- 17% of children ages 2-5 years meet diagnostic criteria for mental health problems.
- 28% of students report not knowing where to turn when they wanted to talk to someone about mental health.
- Canada's youth suicide rate is the third highest in the industrialized world.



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Equity Issues:

- Black Youth are significantly under-represented in mental health and treatment-oriented services and overrepresented in containment-focused facilities.
- First Nations youth die by suicide about 5 to 6 times more often than non-Aboriginal youth. LGBTQ youth face approximately 14 times the risk of suicide and substance abuse than heterosexual peers.
- Youth living in the lowest-income neighborhoods had the highest rates of suicide, emergency department visits for deliberate self-harm, acute care mental health service use, treated prevalence of schizophrenia.

You can see we have a lot of work ahead of us. The statistics lead to many concerns about how we as a society are helping youth navigate their mental health path. I believe we are getting better at what we are doing... recognition, support etc. Mental wellness is a process that needs to be embraced. The erosion of traditional family and a host of other well documented factors offer some explanation of the situation. However, we believe in addition there are other perhaps more subtle but equally devastating considerations at the root of the problem. The reality is our fast paced, stressed out, social media driven, survival of the fittest world is producing youth ill-equipped to deal with life from a healthy balanced perspective. This notion is reinforced by the increase in youth suicide rates. Now more than ever youth need allies paralleled with a proactive rather than reactive support system. For youth in contact with our residential and community based programs allies are in abundance.

Childhood it would seem has become an apprenticeship to adult life and could be bypassed altogether if the person has significant talent and skill. Remarkably many young people are meeting and exceeding these expectations and seem to be thriving. However, many are not able to measure up. Their short-comings are compounded further by societal intolerance of their poor decisions coupled with a lack of understanding surrounding the needs and problems of young people. Childhood no longer affords the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them. Indeed, having granted children rights we seem to presume the legislated



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processes will suffice to protect and where necessary hold them accountable. This has not always been the case. Somewhere along the way we lost the concept of enjoying one's childhood and made it hard work. The hard work is taking its toll and too often instead of being better prepared to assume the responsibilities of adulthood, young people are already overburdened and running on survival mode or worse. We are seeing more and more kids coming into contact with our services seeking refuge from the world. They want to be heard and to focus on the here and now not so much on their future or even their past. Compassion, meeting them where they are at in this moment of time and not force feed them an adult agenda while at the same time tactfully holding them to a higher standard is the art of the dance throughout all our services at Laurencrest.

These can be cruel times and there are more casualties as a result. Throughout our evolution there have been numerous changes in legislation, labels for kids and operating procedures. We have adapted as required and willingly modified our programs while steadfastly maintaining our commitment to the youth we serve.

Our work is not done but we humbly believe we are doing it well. Our resolve to meet the challenges is anchored by the commitment of the Board of Directors and most importantly fortified by the dedication of our staff. On behalf of all the youth we serve... thank-you.