



London Family  
Court Clinic

**2022-2023**  
**Annual Report**

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**Caring communities.  
Resilient children & families.  
Beyond the justice system.**



## **Better outcomes. Brighter futures.**

Children, youth, and families involved in the justice system are at a major turning point in their lives. London Family Court Clinic follows children, youth and their families connected to the justice system through their journey—giving them the tools they need to build their resiliency—helping them to move forward and realize better outcomes once beyond the justice system.

## **We are advocates.**

We strive to push the justice system to be more sensitive and responsive to children, youth, and their families. Another major focus of our work is assisting children, youth and their families who are at risk of being in the justice system to find solutions, because the best outcomes are the ones that don't involve going to court.

We acknowledge that no one organization can solve all the challenges of children, youth, and families. The broader solution rests in developing caring communities that work together to support and inspire one another in their life's journey. We're creating and nurturing caring communities through the work we do because caring communities are inclusive, safe, engaged, and strive to improve the wellbeing of one another.

## Message from Our Executive Director

When I look back at the last 18 months as the Executive Director of LFCC, I am so proud of the resiliency of our teams on the frontlines and in our back office. I am fortified by our growth as professionals; and as service providers as we build and grow our new non-profit, Beacon House Child & Youth Advocacy Centre.

The past 18 months has been a year of rethinking our service operational model; as well restructuring our organization to better serve our clients; and to be highly functional and agile with internal processes. The outcome has been greater efficiency and better outcomes both internally and clinically. We still have some distance to travel; but I am thankful and grateful for how our team has come together to support, motivate, and build each other in the face of change. There are difficulties when meeting change; but with challenge comes great opportunities and we have seized those opportunities and forged our way forward together.

My goal for the first year as E.D. was to create fiscal stability and to put focus back onto our people and workplace culture. Over the past 18 months, we remained agile and achieved financial insight; and created processes where financial stability and foundation are now in our sightline. The road was not easy; but this team worked tirelessly after being tasked with practical and material goals. A big thank you to Elizabeth Lam, Director of Operations & Administration, and Jim Jeffery CPA, our external Accountant, for their continued dedication to the Agency and its overall health. The non-profit sector can be uncertain. Unexpected funding changes in Youth Justice created the need to pivot quickly. Our earlier (and continued) focus on people and coming together proved restructuring was the right move. We were able to adjust, keep our composure; and deliver premium services levels through our internal processes and partnerships for service delivery.

My strategy last year was to renew, rethink and rebuild the Agency to remain well-positioned in recognizing the value and contribution of our staff, and to drive best-practice service delivery. LFCC provides a vital service to vulnerable youth. I remain committed and focused on my strategy but will be adding moving forward together to ensure that we, as an agency, lock arms and drive forward with our mission to serve and build resiliency within children and young people who are at-risk of, or already involved with the justice system.

Beacon House London, Child & Youth Advocacy Centre is now actively piloting advocacy services to youth. I am delighted that our doors are open, and we are serving youth through police referrals. As we continue to pilot for the next 12 months, I know our relationships with our key community partners will grow; as will our advocacy service offerings (future counselling services; and open advocacy services without police referral) to youth and their affected family. We are proud of the work we are doing; and look forward to a bright future through the lens of advocacy. I would like to thank our community partners at London Police Services, CAS, and St. Joseph's Healthcare. I know that Beacon House will be successful in creating a singular access point for child and youth victims and survivors of violence; to move them and their families effectively through a multidisciplinary approach of care and advocacy.



## *Message from* **Our Executive Director**

I also want to congratulate our colleagues and peers at Navigating Onward. They celebrated their 1st Anniversary of full operation in August 2023. I'd like to wish Dr. Kim Harris and her team continued success as they continue to grow and provide exemplary clinical services.

I want to personally thank the LFCC Team who were once again tasked with key deliverables this year. They continue to meet every challenge placed in front of them. I am grateful for them all. I also want to thank the Board of Directors for their support of our Agency and me. We have numerous new Board members who share our vision of building resiliency for our clients before, during and after the justice system. Thank you as well to our community partners, collaborators, funders, and those who contribute to the organization either through volunteerism or donation.

Last and certainly not least, I want to recognize our frontline teams who tirelessly provide services for our clients. As you are fully aware, you are my priority; and I will continue to support you in the endeavor to deliver clinical services to our clients. Your aligned support of LFCC's vision and mission is profoundly inspiring.

To conclude, I want to thank those who have tirelessly worked alongside LFCC; and those who have actively sought out our clinical expertise and allowed us to be part of their journey to positively impact and help change the lives of so many within our community.



**Executive Director, London Family Court Clinic**



## Message from Our Board President

I am pleased once again to provide the address on behalf of the Board of Directors of this amazing organization. I would like to first acknowledge and commend Tuhin, our Executive Director, for his excellence in leadership focusing on developing an organizational culture of trust, engagement and inspiration as we have focused on “Renewing, Rethinking and Rebuilding” LFCC. It has been a year of change and I continue to be impressed with the way in which the senior leadership and staff have embraced the challenges and opportunities with resilience and agility.

The launch of NavOn in August of 2022 has been the result of years of strategic and organizational planning for the Board of Directors and Leadership of LFCC. Our final responsibility was the recruitment of Board of Directors for the NavOn Board. This was completed in September 2022 and resulted in a strong NavOn Board of Directors that demonstrate an important array of experiences, knowledge and enthusiasm. We would like to congratulate the Board, leadership and staff on their first anniversary in August 2023 as an organization.

As LFCC Board of Directors, we too have had to “Renew, Rethink and Rebuild”. We renewed our board by welcoming and orienting many new board members. Our Board has worked to ensure that we are clear on our role as a governance board and that each member is in complete alignment with LFCC’s mission, vision and values. All Board of Director policies and procedures have been reviewed, revised, and approved. We are moving forward together as a robust, experienced Board with a strong foundation.

Our role this year has been in support of Tuhin, Senior Leadership, and LFCC staff as they rediscover the essence of LFCC and our roots and core purpose as an organization: Youth Justice, Prevention and Community Impact. Human resource and financial stability have been a priority as we realign and orient to our new organizational structure.

LFCC Board of Directors is so proud to be a part of an important and innovative community initiative; Beacon House, Child and Youth Advocacy Centre in partnership with the London Police and the Children’s Aid Society. Since the soft launch in February 2023, over 75 youth have accessed and received services.

In summary, I would like to acknowledge and thank each board member, Tuhin and the senior leadership team, all staff, community partners and our funders for their continued support, commitment and service. It definitely takes a village to make LFCC the great organization it is, providing exemplary services to youth and families.



Mary Ann Tucker

**Board President, London Family Court Clinic**

# Judge Genest Fund

London Family Court Clinic continues to be honoured to administer the Judge Genest Fund and are inspired by Judge Genest's belief in youth and their ability to improve their lives. Judge Maurice Genest believed that young people who are struggling in our community deserve to be provided with opportunities for growth. He believed that with a bit of care and attention we could all help to nurture and support the hopes and dreams of these youth in our community. Through an annual gift received in memory of Judge Genest, London Family Court Clinic is able to assist youth in very real and meaningful ways.



*Since 2008, the Judge Genest Fund has had requests to address the needs of over 160 young people who are involved with our local court affiliated services. The Judge Genest Fund can offset the cost of activities and needs that would otherwise not be affordable for these young people – which can often present barriers to their progress in life.*

The Judge Genest Fund provides identified youth with financial assistance to improve their daily lives and to help them reach some of their goals – such as becoming healthier and involved in sports again, gaining employment, and achieving new skills. Over the years, youth have received funds for a variety of needs including: gym memberships, yoga instruction and sports team fees, job supplies such as special eye wear or work boots, fees associated with getting personal identification replaced or a driver's license; certification programs such as food handling or first aid courses, and artistic class costs for art, music or dance.



The focus of need is meant to address the well-being and personal betterment of youth and to support their prosocial involvements in their community life. Judge Genest's legacy of caring deeply and believing in the young people we serve continues to be evident through the Genest Fund.



# Frank Brennan Award

Each year the Frank Brennan Award, named in tribute to a fondly remembered colleague from the early days of the London Family Court Clinic, is awarded to a peer working in the social services sector. Frank was 65 when he joined us and, to our great loss, he died five years later. He brought years of wisdom gained as a probation officer but also the legacy of a rich and remarkable life that included the experience of fighting in the Spanish Civil War, where he met Ernest Hemingway.

Frank, with his literate style and humorous nature, made his mark both on the children he counseled and the community he served. Like Frank, the recipients of the award that bears his name provide exemplary service to local children and families in crisis.

They work within their own organizations and participate in broader community initiatives to exemplify the qualities for which Frank is remembered: compassion, integrity, respectful treatment of clients, effective communication, dedication to advocacy, and support to colleagues. With respect for Frank's strong sense of humanity, we continue to honour his life amongst us.



This year's recipient of the Frank Brennan Award is a person our staff and clients have in common. This recipient moves us out of the "social services" field but keeps us aligned with social and community impact. It was a unanimous decision when this person was nominated.

**We're happy to present this year's Frank Brennan Award to Detective Sgt. Katherine Dann of the London Police Service.**

We have witnessed firsthand the positive effect Katherine has on programs, clients, co-workers and by natural extension, the community at large. From her unrelenting work to making Beacon House Child & Youth Advocacy Centre a reality; to her unwavering partnership on our important grant projects; Katherine is a true example of community leadership and collaboration; and LPS's own, Deeds not Words. It is a pleasure to work with Katherine and to see someone take a vision and make it a reality. Her desire to help others and see them through life's ups and downs shines through in all that she does. Her passion and giving doesn't waver. When think about impact and legacy, Katherine easily comes to mind. She is truly a worthy recipient of this award. We are proud to recognize her skills, compassion, commitment, and impact. Katherine has worked with LPS for 19 years, 3 of those in the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit. We look forward to her continued service with LPS, all of us at LFCC, and this community. Thank you, Katherine, and congratulations.





## Frank Brennan Award

*Thank you to the London Family Court Clinic for selecting me to receive the Frank Brennan Award! Having worked with LFCC on several projects I am aware of the impactful work the LFCC does for children and youth in our community and I am honoured to receive this award.*

*In September of 2020, my 16th year of policing, I was transferred to the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section. I was a Detective and was responsible for investigating allegations of sexual assault and child abuse. Very quickly I began hearing about the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre model as many were open across Canada. I was excited to learn that a CYAC for London-Middlesex had been in discussion for a number of years. I began sending emails to various community partners that had previously been involved in the discussions. Soon, we had a representative from the London Family Court Clinic, St Josephs Healthcare London and Children's Aid Society for London & Middlesex at the table and were ready to form our steering committee. In November of 2021, we had our first CYAC meeting. It was clear from our first meeting that the time for talking about opening a CYAC was over, it was time for action. I am sure, if given the opportunity, we would all have shouted from the rooftops that we can and MUST do better for these kids. In January of 2022, Tuhin Jajal took over as the new ED of LFCC and the project, as well as lifelong friendships, began building from there.*



*Although I put my own blood, sweat and tears into the Beacon House and other projects, so did many others. There is nothing better than working with a group of like-minded people, with the same vision, to achieve something great together. We painted, we sanded walls, we built furniture, we (maybe just me) shopped on Facebook Marketplace, we toured other CYAC's, we wrote grant applications, we begged for donations. We did it together. I am proud of the work that I, and others, do to make things better for children and victims/survivors of crime. I am honoured to work with other people and agencies in the community that share a common goal.*

*Children are the future of our society. Adverse childhood experiences have lifelong impacts on these kids and the people who love and care for them. The key partners in the Beacon House have been given the greatest responsibility... to hear their stories and to do something about it to make things better. The Child Advocates work tirelessly to support families, to be their voice to get them counseling, to listen to their needs (which is sometimes as basic as food, clothing, or hygiene products). Most importantly, they are the smiling face to greet the children and to say "We are all here for you". Thank you to our Child Advocates.*

*We, as human beings and as members of the community, must support each other, help others when we can and work together to protect our children.*

*I cannot end this without recognizing the members of my team, the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Section. They are the ones who sit across from children and ask these little people to tell them what happened to them. They absorb a piece of that child's trauma with each and every interview. Their passion, empathy, dedication, and commitment to their cases is inspiring. I am so proud of the work that they do and the impact they have on the community.*

*Thank you LFCC for this prestigious award!*

# Wayne Willis Award

The Wayne Willis Award was begun in 2013 in recognition of youth whose progress and efforts in the past year demonstrate a commitment to education/skill development, personal growth and community involvement.

A young person's ability to persevere in the face of challenges is celebrated as part of this award; it represents success, resiliency and healthy choices.

Wayne Willis, for whom the award is named, was a clinician at London Family Court Clinic for over 40 years and he guided hundreds of young people over the years.

This award is a way to recognize both Wayne for his years of dedication as well as the many amazing young people who continue to be involved with London Family Court Clinic.



*Wayne Willis became the first-ever employee at London Family Court Clinic after being sought out by Judge Genest in 1974.*



Last year, J was nominated for this award by two clinicians from our Youth Therapeutic Court and Multidisciplinary Clinical Supports Teams.

J was 20 years old at the time and had been a client of LFCC between 2018 and 2022. During this period she had been involved with a number of our services including our court, counselling, service navigation and assessment programs.

Many of her struggles at that time involved substance use issues. But with hard work and supports, J was able to make significant gains in 2022. This included her renting an apartment and moving away from a negative lifestyle. She planned to return to school and pursue a career as an entrepreneur in the woodworking industry.

It was agreed that J embodied the essence of this award and all of us at LFCC felt proud of her amazing accomplishments!

With her mother on hand, J gratefully accepted the certificate of achievement and the small financial prize at our December staff meeting.

**Cheers to J – keep up the good work!**

# Alan Leschied Award

Last year, Dr. Leschied, sorry, ALAN, provided us with a beautiful missive on working with justice-involved youth and the special characteristics required to do so. He reflected on how we must show up for youth and their families when he wrote about integrity, science and best practices in social services, caring deeply and being truly human – having a sense of genuine humanity that involves our true selves. Alan spoke about how it is necessary to use our personalities and values as our tools to truly embody our service. He's a really special person, huh? Alan also went on to discuss the effect that so many talented and unique professional personalities had on him as a budding clinician – Judge Genest, Peter Jaffe, Wayne Willis, Jules Brozowsky, and Frank Brennan – all embodiments of compassionate humanity and (I think you'll all agree) folks with phenomenal personalities just oozing into their work and relationships. Heck, relationships and their practice? Same thing.

In talking with my fellow clinicians and colleagues involved in clinical training at NavOn/LFCC and the Psychology Consortium, we quickly came to realize that it was these kinds of people, particularly when they were our mentors, that made all the difference to us succeeding in our various professions. We call them Unicorn Mentors because they are magical embodiments of guidance and validation who challenge and support us, that come into our lives just when we most need them. Alan Leschied has been this unicorn to countless students and early-career professionals over his career. And so an award was born!



Alan said, "So, the challenge to me has always been presented in the following: how can we translate what we know and who we are in an integrated way that shows compassion, respect, and care in all that we do? There is no mystery to it. It is in part the gift that we are all given in being part of providing service to others."

**This year, our Psychology Residents, Chastine Lamoureux and Melissa Read, determined that the person who best demonstrated this spirit in their mentorship and relationship with our students is Youth Therapeutic Court Clinician, Ms. Joelene Bamford!**

She received a number of nominations from consortium staff and students that highlighted her "embodiment of ethical practice and sensitive mentorship." For what must feel like decades to her, Joelene has been frequently identified as endlessly patient and student-focused, explaining court processes and the various players in a full and easy-to-understand way. She is consistently available to support and mentor both new staff and learners with kindness. She gives of her time and herself, sometimes staying after hours with folks who are in no way her responsibility because she just genuinely cares about clients and wants to encourage the emotional health and wellbeing, as well as the knowledge and skills of her colleagues.

I hope you will all join me in recognizing and honoring Joelene Bamford, a true unicorn and this year's incredibly deserving recipient of the Alan Leschied Award for demonstrating outstanding commitment and dedication to responsive and relationship-focused mentorship.

Sincerely,

Dilys Haner, Director of Clinical Training for LFCC/NavOn and the Narwhal Consortium



## Statistics

The demand for services has been rising year over year. This past fiscal year, we saw significant increases of referrals to our Child Witness Project, and increases in the number of clients our teams' saw in the ADR-Link, Youth Justice Assessments, Youth Therapeutic Court, and Multidisciplinary Clinical Supports programs compared to the previous fiscal year.



Here's a breakdown of the statistics of active programs and services at London Family Court Clinic in the 2022-2023 year.

**125**

Families referred to ADR services through ADR-Link

**250**

Children referred to Child Witness Project

**89**

MCSP Counselling Clients

**51**

MCSP Plan of Care Meetings

**18**

MCSP Special Consultations

**29**

Youth Justice Assessments (Section 34s)

**66**

Youth Therapeutic Court Clients

**26**





Youth Therapeutic Court Diverted Clients

## ADR-Link & Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

ADR-Link continues to link 8 Children's Aid Society (CAS) offices and 10 First Nations to services for families to access neutral practitioners who help to navigate difficult situations for children, youth, and their families. People who experience CAS involvement and are at risk of or already attending court for family matters that involve safety/stability for children and youth are encouraged to access these free services. CAS workers are required to offer ADR to families, and it is recommended families access these services as early as possible for the best possible outcomes.



### During the 2022-2023 year, ADR-Link connected families to ADR services as follows

	 Child Protection Mediation	 Family Group Conferencing	 Indigenous Approaches	 4th Option/Other	Total
Referrals carried from previous year	49	46	21	5	121
New Referrals	79	23	15	8	125
					246



## ADR-Link & Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

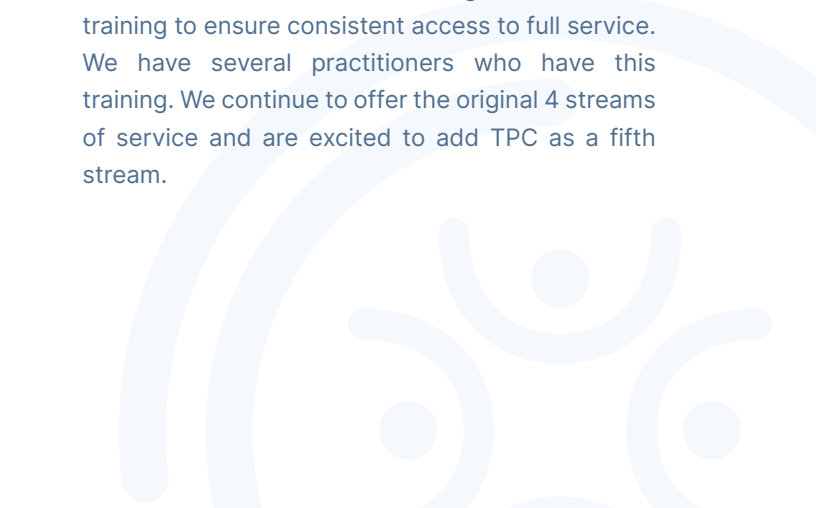


### Moving Forward

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services released a new directive on April 01, 2023 called Ready, Set, Go (CW 003-23) which introduces scheduled interventions for children/youth in long-term CAS care. The program includes increased support and access; guidance for practical life skills and planning for successful futures. These supports will positively impact outcomes for children and youth.

ADR-Link anticipates CAS workers will refer youth to us as soon as they become eligible. Referral to ADR-Link will engage practitioners to connect and, ideally, maintain long term relationships to provide continuity of care with the youth, CAS, and other supports that may be available. Across the province ADR providers are referring to the Ready, Set, Go services as **Transitional Planning Conferences (TPC)**.

Our roster members are encouraged to take TPC training to ensure consistent access to full service. We have several practitioners who have this training. We continue to offer the original 4 streams of service and are excited to add TPC as a fifth stream.





## Beacon House Child & Youth Advocacy Centre

Beacon House has been years in the making. The need to provide a fulsome and holistic wrap-around service for child & youth victims and survivors of crime has been, in our opinion, an overall service gap. Coming together with key partners in the policing, child welfare and medical communities was an instrumental and paramount step in the right direction.

With the support of Justice Canada, we are proud to be the lead agency for Beacon House CYAC. Through hard work, consistent focus on mission; and collaboration with our community partners at LPS, St. Joseph's Healthcare and CAS-London Middlesex – we are excited that we have begun piloting delivery of advocacy services through police referral.

Beacon House's Child & Youth Advocacy Program is a cost-free voluntary service offered to all families involved with the centre during a child-involved investigation. The child / youth could be a victim or witness to abuse and violence. Our advocates provide immediate and ongoing support by explaining the process and helping connect families to community resources. The advocate plays a key role in the system navigation process; and helps the child and family transition through the different phases of the reporting process and into short and long-term community support and therapeutic programs.

Our mission is to support children, youth, and families within a safe and supportive environment when they've experienced trauma or abuse. Our child-friendly space is design to promote a sense of welcoming and calm during what can be a difficult time.



### Continuity. Collaboration. Cooperation.

At Beacon House, children and youth will be provided with a trauma-informed approach when involved with a criminal proceeding. Having a singular access point where they only need to recount their experience once; reduces the risk of re-traumatization caused by retelling their experience numerous times to multiple professionals. Having a centralized hub through our partnerships and creating strong community resource access will allow us to guide children and youth through these processes and the system as whole. Running parallel to LFCC's Child Witness Project (CWP) provides a strong wrap-around service if the matter proceeds into the court system through criminal charges.

### What is a Child & Youth Advocacy Centre?

Child and Youth Advocacy Centres, also known as CYACs, have a focus on partnerships with service providers such as police, child protection services, justice participants and medical professionals to allow for a more responsive, seamless way for children and youth to disclose abuse / violence and receive support. The current criminal justice system in London-Middlesex lacks a coordinated approach in order to provide children and youth with the best possible service when facing a traumatic event. The collaboration within the Beacon House will ensure a trauma-informed and child-friendly approach to investigations.

Our goal is to limit trauma and create a space and process in which we can facilitate the healing process. We are proud to provide this service to children and young people and do so with great passion and humility.

## Child Witness Project



The goal of the Child Witness Program (CWP) is to prepare young survivors of crime and witnesses for their court experience and reduce the trauma caused by their involvement in the criminal justice process. CWP works to achieve this goal by providing court preparation, trauma education, supporting the use of special testimonial aids, and providing in-court testimony support.

We have had a change in leadership this year with Joelene Bamford coming on as Court Services Manager. Joelene's many years of experience with the court system and her optimistic attitude have been greatly appreciated by the clinicians. All of LFCC and the community would like to congratulate Joelene on this new and exciting position!



We at CWP and LFCC are sad to share the news that our Facility Dog Yzer, who has been with us for the past 4 years, retired back in June. Yzer is experiencing some health concerns and we want to ensure that

her well-being is our focus. At this time, LFCC and NSD (National Service Dogs) are committed to providing our friend, colleague, and "goodest of girls" Yzer, with the best care possible. We know all of you will join us in thanking Yzer for her exemplary years of service. We would like to take this opportunity to offer our support to, and wish Yzer and her caring handlers Ellissa Riel, Rose Van Wieren, and Fran Nuvoloni well. We also would like to thank our youth and community partners who have been incredibly kind and understanding. Our youth have shared that just having met her has given them the strength to succeed and move beyond the criminal justice system.

Our major achievement from the year has been the launch of the pilot of Beacon House Child and Advocacy Centre. Beacon House's Child & Youth Advocacy Program is a voluntary service offered to all families involved with the centre during a child abuse investigation. Our advocates provide immediate and ongoing support by explaining the process and helping connect families to community resources. The advocate will help the family transition through the different phases of the reporting process and into long-term support programs. The CWP clinicians were instrumental parts of the steering community and worked to establish best practices within the centre alongside London Police Services.



We are proud to welcome Ellen Lonsdale and Natalie Patrick to our advocacy team. Both come with great experience and expertise in child development, community resources, and trauma. They have been great additions to the Beacon House team, and we have enjoyed the positive energy they bring to the program.

It is also through Beacon House that we were able to run a very successful toy drive last holiday season where we received several items like mindfulness activities, card games, and weighted stuffed animals. We thank all those who took the time to donate and would encourage people to keep their eyes out for more events in the coming year!



## Multidisciplinary Clinical Supports Program

The Multidisciplinary Clinical Supports Program (MCSP) is a highly skilled team of professionals consisting of registered psychotherapists, a registered nurse, a psychologist and a psychiatrist. Their primary objective is to provide comprehensive mental health services to young residents and their families in six facilities across London and Middlesex County. These services are tailored to meet the unique needs of those in therapeutic residential care and youth justice (custody) settings, as well as those on probation and participating in mental health diversion programs. The MCSP team provides intensive one-on-one support to ensure the best possible outcomes for the youth they serve.

The MCSP team has remained dedicated to supporting our communities during the ongoing pandemic recovery. We have adapted our services to meet the unique needs of youth and families, offering both individual and group support. Despite the challenges of this post-pandemic era, we have continued to foster strong partnerships with vital organizations like Humana Community Services, Craigwood Youth Services, and the London Youth Probation Office.

Our primary objective is to provide tailored services that meet the needs of those we serve, as we work collaboratively to rebuild and regain strength in our community.



In response to the gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, we have made necessary adjustments to our service delivery to provide a combination of in-person and virtual support.

Our primary goal is to ensure the safety of our clients and community partners while continuing to offer effective mental health services in a fair and equitable manner.

We are grateful for the support of our community partners in adopting this hybrid model, which has allowed us to engage with young people in a meaningful way.



## Multidisciplinary Clinical Supports Program



### Client Success Story

Recently, a therapist on the MCSP team received an update from a former client who had been struggling with a severe mental health condition some years ago. When the MCSP clinician first started working with the client, they were homeless, and their overall health and chances of recovery were low. The individual had been admitted to the hospital many times, and their parents were overwhelmed and unable to provide adequate support.

This client shared that they have accomplished a significant feat in their mental health journey by attaining and maintaining remission. They attributed their notable achievements to the invaluable insights and coping skills they gained during therapy. These skills have equipped them with a positive and well-balanced perspective, allowing them to confront daunting challenges in their life with confidence. This individual was very appreciative of the unwavering encouragement and support of their therapist, who helped them utilize all available resources to achieve their mental health goals. Their determination and resilience, combined with their therapist's steadfast support, have been instrumental in their journey toward emotional and psychological well-being.

Presently, this client is working at a nearby retail store, which has given them a renewed sense of purpose and boosted their self-esteem. It's inspiring to see how much progress they've made in their personal development, which is a testament to their determination and resilience. It's worth mentioning that not only did they achieve their goals, but they also successfully reunited with their family. They're currently living with their family, enjoying the comfort and happiness of being surrounded by a supportive network.

## Navigating Onward



NavOn celebrated its one-year anniversary on August 1, 2023 as a not-for-profit social enterprise! NavOn is an exciting clinic providing psychological services to meet the needs of individuals and families in our community. NavOn emerged out of almost 50 years of foundational clinical work and research conducted by the London Family Court Clinic. NavOn is unique in the communities we serve as a social enterprise with a mindset focused on working together, equitable access to service, and giving back.



NavOn offers a suite of clinical and court-adjacent mental health services to support the well-being of children, youth, and families whose needs are at-risk of not being met by other systems and agencies in Southwestern Ontario for a variety of reasons. For example, we support families coping with separation and divorce and children, complex neurodevelopmental challenges (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder), as well as youth and adults needing dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality™. For more about our clinical services, please visit [www.navigatingonward.com](http://www.navigatingonward.com).

NavOn offers professional development and training based on our areas of expertise. In addition to our monthly offerings on topics such as trauma-informed care, understanding self-harm in youth, and FASD for educators, this past year we were contracted by the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services to provide training on suicide assessment and intervention for front-line staff in different settings. We also partnered with the Ontario Association for Family Mediation to offer Child Inclusive Mediation, a program that develops knowledge and skills in mediators to elevate the child's voice in family dispute resolution and family court. Throughout the year, our staff presented at conferences and were invited to participate in panel discussions including at the Ontario Court of Justice, Judicial Development Institute. We have developed a catalogue of our monthly training offerings for the community which will be available in the coming weeks. To get a copy of the catalogue, please contact [info@navigatingonward.com](mailto:info@navigatingonward.com) to get added to our mailing list.

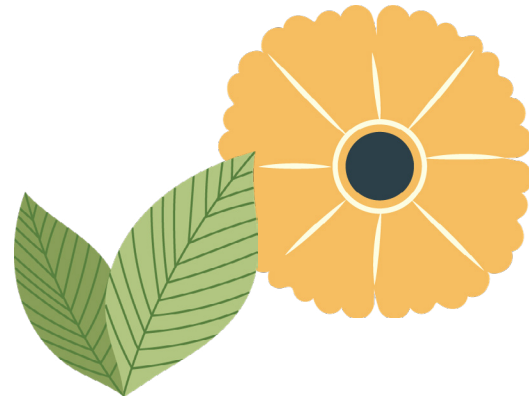




## Navigating Onward



NavOn is the anchor agency for the Narwhal Psychology Residency Consortium, a program designed to prepare students in the final year of their PhD for the practice of clinical and/or clinical-forensic psychology through systematic training in assessment, treatment, consultation, program evaluation/research, and the ethical guidelines and professional practice standards that underly psychological practice in Ontario. The Consortium consists of three organizations that provide clinical and forensic psychology services to children, adolescents, and families in London, Ontario, and the surrounding communities: NavOn, London Family Court Clinic, and Mary J. Wright Child and Youth Development Centre (MJWCYDC) at Western University. In March, we welcomed site visitors from the Canadian Psychological Association as we worked through the final stages of accreditation for the Residency Consortium. We also coordinated clinical training for practicum students at both LFCC and NavOn. This past year, we welcomed two residents and one student, all of whom successfully completed their programs while infusing the agencies with their enthusiasm and passion, as well as contributing to valuable knowledge exchange.



NavOn has a community-minded, dedicated and entrepreneurial team. NavOn supports each staff member to give back to their community through a range of activities. This past year, some of the ways NavOn contributed to our community include:

- PEERS program - a free social skills group for youth the complex neurodevelopmental challenges,
- Suicide postvention – coordination of the community collaboration that responds to community needs following a suicide,
- Board membership (executive) for the Ontario Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC),
- Participation on the planning committee for the Annual London and Region FASD conference.


NavOn would like to thank our exceptional Board of Directors for guiding us through this important first year milestone. NavOn's Directors are: Brenda Kerton (president), Joel Richer, Mary Ann Tucker, Marsha Bradley, Glenn Hines, and Erica McIntee.







## Youth Justice Assessments



The London Family Court Clinic has continued to serve London and surrounding area courthouses in our region through the provision of s.34 psychological assessments. These specialized assessments seek to identify underlying factors that contribute to the behaviour of youth who are 12-18 years old and who are facing charges under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Our s.34 assessments serve to provide the court with a thorough understanding of the youth's historical and current mental health status and needs. The report is used to assist the court in making informed decisions related to sentencing and subsequent treatment planning.

Over the past year, our Youth Justice Team has undergone some exciting staff changes as we have welcomed the addition of 3 new staff. Chastine Lamoureux completed her psychology residency this year and has accepted a position as a Psychometrist with our team, with the intention to pursue supervised practice and register with The College of Psychologists of Ontario. Lisa Mitchell has joined our team as our Clinical Case Worker and through a well-developed social work lens, Lisa plays a pivotal role in enhancing our clinical assessment services through the provision of intake and assessment navigation support. Melissa Zellas has joined the team as our new Administrative Assistant. Melissa brings a fresh perspective and extensive experience in administrative support which has contributed to the efficiency and success of our team.

As noted in previous years, our youth justice team continues to see an increase in the complexity of cases referred to our program, and the types of offences that our clients are being charged with have also increased in seriousness. We are continuing to see clients struggling with mental health issues, unidentified learning challenges, and behavioral difficulties. Based on these observations, we are committed to remaining focused on our client's needs. As we move forward, we look forward to our continued service to the courts, community, and clients we serve.

## Youth Therapeutic Court

The London Family Court Clinic's Youth Therapeutic Court (YTC) program has successfully completed another year of operation, providing essential services and support to youth in London/Middlesex County who have been charged with an offence under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (charged before the age of 18) and have a diagnosed or suspected mental illness, traumatic brain injury or developmental disability. The Youth Therapeutic Court team works with youth, families and caregivers to provide support, assessment services, advocacy and in some cases, when appropriate, an opportunity to participate in the Mental Health Diversion Program.

Since 2020, Youth Court in London has remained virtual and weekly court sessions are held online via Zoom. The Youth Therapeutic Court Team have found this method to have many benefits. This adaptation brought on by the Global Pandemic has allowed for the seamless continuation of court proceedings and has become an efficient and productive tool that has addressed some of the barriers related to transportation needs for youth and their families, while also mitigating loss of time from school. Virtual court via Zoom has proven to be an innovative solution, maintaining high levels of youth engagement and participation.

This year the YTC team was excited to welcome His Honour Justice Sigurdson as he has taken on the role of presiding over London's youth court. Justice Sigurdson's experience and expertise in both law and social work have brought a unique perspective that has focused on addressing core issues, and has provided the team with an opportunity to focus on both the short term and long-term goals specific to Youth Therapeutic Court.

Over the last year, YTC has continued to receive a steady flow of referrals from various sources, reflecting the program's reputation and recognition for its effective approach in addressing the needs of youth with mental health concerns who are involved in the justice system. Through innovative approaches, dedicated staff, and collaborative partnerships, YTC remains committed to its mission and we look forward to another year providing support and services to our clients.



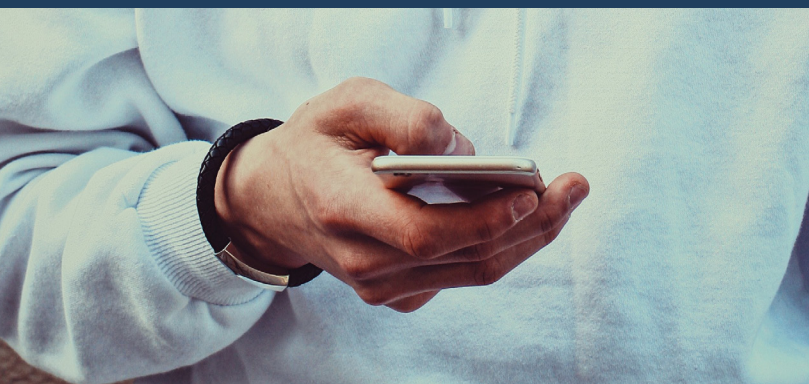
*Online Safety for All:*

## A Safer and Vital Communities (SVC) Grant

In the fall of 2022, London Family Court Clinic was the successful recipient of a Safer and Vital Communities grant and we began work on the Online Safety for All project.

The aim of this project is to address the growing concern of internet-based sexual exploitation. Specifically, the project team is developing, delivering, and evaluating a psycho-educational early intervention program, designed to direct young men, aged 12 to 18 years old, who are identified as “at low risk”, away from future high-risk internet-based sexual exploitation. This could include, but is not limited to, youth who police identify as those engaged in the inappropriate sharing of intimate images or sexting.

The psycho-educational program is targeted toward lower risk youth who have engaged in sexually inappropriate behaviours online; these youth have never been charged with any sexual offending behaviour but are being warned by police about their online actions/behaviour.



The project is in collaboration with local community stakeholders participating in monthly advisory group meetings as well as external consultants providing research and data analysis. London Police Services (LPS), and more specifically, the Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit, are closely involved as key partners in the grant, where their support has been of paramount importance and impact. Through community collaboration and consultation with LPS team members, a process for referral of local “at risk” youth is being developed. LFCC continues to refine and create efficiencies within our referral and intake process to begin the piloting of our group program in Fall 2023.

Additionally, over the past number of months, through focused research, data collection and team meetings we have been strategically designing and refining our psycho-educational group program and are looking toward offering our first group program for young men in September. This psycho-educational group is designed to be 6 weeks long and will address key topics such as: information about the law; the challenges of understanding consent when online; and how to manage the draw of pornography that is readily available and accessible, yet often inappropriate as well as misleading for youth.

We also plan to develop and deploy specialized training for local professionals about online sexual exploitation later this fall and winter. The project grant shall end in April 2024 at which time we anticipate knowing more clearly what early intervention programs of this nature should include, based on our evaluation work and feedback from youth and parents.

Further to the aforementioned, we will engage our community to ensure we are all more aware and educated about the growing concerns of internet safety and online sexual behaviours amongst youth.



# A Virtual DBT Group for High-Risk Youth: An Asynchronous Learning Approach

The challenge of providing a virtual Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) group to high-risk youth involves managing the neurodiverse needs and attention struggles of participants. This initiative focused on enhancing youth engagement in a DBT virtual group program by developing an asynchronous learning approach to a DBT skills program and including a parent/guardian component.

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is a cognitive-behavioral therapy first developed for individuals living with borderline personality disorder and to treat suicidal and self-injurious behaviours among adults at high-risk of suicide (Linehan, 1993). Rathus and Miller (2015) subsequently developed the DBT Skills for Adolescents treatment model which includes a set of standardized skills to teach youth to recognize internal states, focus attention through mindfulness, understand and regulate emotions, tolerate distressing situations, and develop and maintain interpersonal relationships. Parents of youth are included in the program as an additional support for skill development. The focus of a skills-based DBT program is consistent with the needs of high-risk youth who often struggle with self-regulation, unhealthy coping (i.e., substance use, self-harm), problem solving, and anxiety management. However, these young people often experience barriers to lengthy interventions that require a parent's participation.



The London Family Court Clinic (LFCC) has provided high-risk youth (13 to 19 years old) with a modified DBT group program since 2018. LFCC is a not-for-profit organization that works with court involved youth and their families. Additionally, our programs address the mental health needs of youth who reside in out-of-home placements as well as cross-over youth who are involved with child welfare as well as the youth justice system. The authors of this article have each had direct service experience with LFCC programs and have been involved in the development or evaluation of a number of DBT initiatives. In the current asynchronous project, the authors have had active roles in overseeing the initiative, coordinating the project as a whole, and developing and reviewing the produced video materials and facilitating focus group feedback sessions.

The DBT skills program, originally developed at LFCC, was modified from the DBT Skills for Adolescents treatment model developed by Rathus and Miller to accommodate high-risk youth. Most notably, it was shortened in length (9–10 weeks) as marginalized youth are often unstable in their lives and experience frequent moves, making the typical 6-to-10-month DBT program difficult to complete. Each of the four DBT modules (mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance skills) were taught, with skills determined to be essential selected to accommodate high-risk youth. Additionally, parents were not incorporated into our DBT program since marginalized and system involved youth are often living away from home temporarily (e.g., group homes), or their parents are working multiple jobs, which makes their availability limited.

## A Virtual DBT Group for High-Risk Youth: An Asynchronous Learning Approach

Based on a 2020 pilot program evaluation, youth participating in this modified DBT program showed positive gains (N = 53 matched pre-post self-reports; unpublished data). Significant improvements in functioning were seen with respect to reduced anxiety, depression, and trauma symptoms, as well as suicide ideation and attempts. Additionally, the youth reported increased emotional regulation and sense of self-efficacy. Youth also reported positive satisfaction with this modified group, with more than 85% saying they would recommend the program to a friend.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, this program was quickly shifted to address the “new normal” by mirroring the in-person program to an online format. All aspects of this modified DBT program were shifted to a live virtual platform. Early on, challenges were observed by group facilitators about distraction and the participation of youth in discussions while online. Not looking at the camera or turning off their camera was often noted, and it was difficult to know if youth were engaging in other activities online, (such as gaming). These behaviours also tended to have a “contagion” effect with the other youth online, resulting in a spreading experience of poor engagement. Feedback at group end, provided by the youth themselves, indicated a desire for more time to talk about the skills being taught and they confirmed finding the didactic approach online difficult to attend to at times.

Observation and participant feedback confirmed that teens were less talkative while on a video platform and resistant to consistently being on video (although this was explained as a safety requirement for group participation). Video conferencing in a group is a modality that forces young people to observe their every move and draws attention to their physical features; as is widely appreciated, a common adolescent preoccupation involves their being highly sensitive to the perceptions of others. Research shows that viewing oneself on video stimulates self-awareness, which can detract cognitive energy from the task at hand (Hassell & Cotton, 2017). Additionally, researchers have suggested that attempting to mirror face-to-face processes online may not be the most efficient, acceptable, or effective way to adapt DBT to an online environment (Lakeman et al., 2022). On this basis the project team began to seek out possible strategies for improving young people's attention to the DBT skills training program using a virtual platform; we considered the currently popular asynchronous learning approach as one that could potentially support the neurodiverse learning needs of youth, while also allowing for more opportunity for discussion in a live group format since the didactic component would be eliminated.

### Innovative Practice: Developing an Asynchronous 12-Week DBT Program

During the pandemic in particular, asynchronous learning has emerged as an alternative format to traditional education. Watching or engaging with pre-recorded material prior to a teaching or discussion session is a more common approach to learning for students these days. Research on the efficacy of this virtual learning method has showed promising results, reporting that students are able to more comprehensively understand and engage with the presented material (Offir et al., 2008). Further, asynchronous learning has demonstrated benefits for atypical learners, allowing lower functioning adolescents for example to participate more actively in their learning process and consume the material at their own pace (Offir et al., 2008).

Our innovative DBT program has built on the existing educational knowledge of an asynchronous learning approach and incorporated it as part of our DBT program for high-risk youth, wherein pre-recorded DBT skills/modules were developed along with a new live group format to encourage youth participation. In total 77 short videos (ranging from 2–13 minutes in length) were developed and recorded. The videos are purposefully kept brief to increase engagement and mimic the content that youth are regularly exposed to through social media. The videos each utilize a variety of graphics, videos, text, and voices to capture youth engagement. Youth are encouraged in the videos to rewatch the skills material as needed, and homework is assigned for practice before the live group component.

## A Virtual DBT Group for High-Risk Youth: An Asynchronous Learning Approach

This video approach to skills teaching was also intended to free up more time for meaningful discussions in the live group component, eliciting discussion about the skills being taught. Parallel live group materials were created to complement each week's learning materials, to promote feedback and discussions with youth. A week after the videos are shared, program participants will meet in a live virtual group format to discuss what was learned. The group is discussion and activity based, moving away from a didactic environment to increase youth participation.

An additional goal of the project was to develop a module and encourage a more active role for parents/ guardians/or supportive adults of a teen. While this group was purposefully not involved in prior programming, research shows that involving parents/guardians in DBT treatment is associated with contingencies within the home environment, reduced extreme behavioural patterns, as well as a reduction in youth treatment drop-out rates (Miller et al., 2002). The asynchronous program created an opportunity to engage parents/guardians/or supportive adults who previously may not have been able to attend due to time constraints or due to residing away from the youth, as is common with youth involved with child welfare and justice systems.

For the three weeks in which adults are invited to be involved, adults and youth attend separate groups so as to not interrupt group cohesion or lead to any youth feeling left out if they do not have an adult who is able to attend.

**The table below outlines the number of weeks devoted to each module, the specific DBT skills taught, and the number of videos created for each module.**

Module	Duration (weeks)	DBT Skills Taught	Number of Videos Youth	Adult
Orientation	1		4	4
Mindfulness	2	Three States of Mind What & How	12	0
Emotion Regulation	2	Model of Emotions ABC PLEASE	9	0
Distress Tolerance	3	ACCEPTS Self-Soothe with the Senses TIPP Radical Acceptance Turning the Mind Willingness vs. Willfulness Half Smile	16	0
Interpersonal Effectiveness	1	DEARMAN GIVE	5	0
Validation	2	Dialectics Thinking Mistakes Validating Self Validating Others	10	10
Skills Review & Future Planning	1		7	0



## A Virtual DBT Group for High-Risk Youth: An Asynchronous Learning Approach

### Implications & Relevant Future Directions

The current project expanded a modified DBT program for high-risk youth into an asynchronous learning program. Additionally, a new parent module about validation skills was included in this work in an effort to further enhance the engagement of youth.

This project has helped to highlight video considerations and necessary components to incorporate into the development of an asynchronous program. Young people's connection to the images shown, their varied learning issues and possible distractibility when watching videos, the appropriate use of youth friendly language, culturally diverse and representative materials, reasonable pacing of the information, and technology sharing needs, were some of the key areas considered during the focus group work. Similar issues were reviewed with parents during focus group engagement, and videos were modified accordingly.

This virtual DBT video program has the potential for replication within other communities and jurisdictions. As well, LFCC offering the group in another diverse community could further inform group process needs. Sharing of this program material will, however, require consideration of copyright needs and appropriate platforms for video sharing that would restrict widespread distribution while also promoting safety and confidentiality for participants. Next steps would involve identifying funding to operate and evaluate fully this well-developed virtual DBT (asynchronous learning) program for high-risk youth.



# Staffing Updates

This past year has been one of many changes with several staff members transferring from LFCC to Navigating Onward (NavOn) through strategic workforce planning or retirement.

Dr. Dan Ashbourne's retirement in the summer of 2022 and became a consultant with NavOn to continue his work as a trainer; and as a psychologist working with families. Dr. Ashbourne was LFCC's third Executive Director prior to his retirement; and are fortunate to have him connected through NavOn.

Dr. Linda Baker, LFCC's second Executive Director, also retired this year from her long-term secondment at Western's CREVAWC. Dr. Baker continued to be an ally for LFCC since her departure in 2012.

LFCC continues to welcome the opportunities to participate in student and professional development and mentorship. Continuing to assist in shaping and educating future clinical leaders remains a paramount mission and passion for LFCC.



Below is a list of our current staff, those that have worked with us throughout the year for short-term contracts and those that have moved on to apply their skills and passion for service in other organizations. Each contributes to the rich history of LFCC and to a future built on excellence, compassion, and skill.

## London Family Court Clinic Team

Ellen Arnold-Lonsdale  
Faven Ghetnet  
Lisa Mitchell  
Tuhin Jajal  
Rachel Sardo  
Aaron Carder  
Natalie Patrick  
Melissa Zellas  
Joelene Bamford

Elizabeth Lam  
Valerie MacGregor  
Ryan MacKay  
Frances Nuvoloni  
Dr. Joyce Radford  
Ellissa Riel  
Tammy Riley  
Rosemary Van Wieren

## NavOn Team

Dr. Kim Harris  
Melissa Moore  
Jacqueline MacMillan  
Dr. Daniel Ashbourne  
Dr. Peter Jaffe  
Melissa Read  
Dr. Dilys Haner  
Heather Fredin  
Carolyn Carrier  
Chastine Lamoureux

## Student Team

Ashlyn Carwana  
Gabriella Divalentin  
Hailey Janssens  
Macall Oldenhof  
Abbey Pardo  
Genevieve Schadenberg  
Stephen Shin  
Kaitlyn Wierenga

## Volunteers

Matt Grandy  
Veronica Chen

## We said goodbye to

Dr. Kay Reif  
Jesse Minns  
Amirah Hassen  
Brad Daly

Angie Champagne  
Ashley Jokhu  
Kahawani Doxtator

## Board of Directors

It is difficult to express fully our appreciation for the expertise and commitment our board of directors brings to the table every month. Our President, Mary Ann Tucker, has been engaged with LFCC's board since 2012 and has led us through some difficult days of transition and growth over the years. The board works with compassion for our clients as their foundation for discussions, to ensure they provide a variety of perspectives to ensure services are delivered responsibly.



On behalf of the entire staff team, our clients, and the community at large, we thank you for sharing your time and expertise with our organization.

**Mary Ann Tucker**

President

**Ketan Ramji**

Vice President

**Tuhin Jajal**

Executive Director, LFCC

**Afeez Ajibowu**

Secretary/Treasurer

**Brenda Young**

Member

**Camille Riggs**

Member

**Tara Van Den Akker**

Member

**Lucy Chimhanda**

Member

**Doug Ferguson**

Member

**Samantha Skinner**

Member

**Phil Squire**

Member



# Consultant Spotlight

## Dr. Peter Jaffe

When requested to allow us to name him for the consultant spotlight in this year's annual report, Dr. Jaffe submitted the synopsis below. He is extremely modest in his summary. Peter has worked with families and individuals from one end of the spectrum to the other and approached each with compassion, respect and strategies that value the history, capacity and potential within the human seated before him. He has been a leader and mentor to literally thousands of professionals in multiple disciplines at every stage of their skill development. It's impossible to measure how his teaching and research has shaped policy and practice or how many families/individuals have moved through difficult times having benefited from his expertise either directly or as a result of his research. Peter is generous and kind. The international recognition he has received over the years (ironically) does not do justice to the legacy he continues to build.



*Way back in 1975 (half-century ago) I was interviewed for the position of LFCC Director. The late Judge Maurice Genest and the LFCC Board of Directors led by family lawyer Alf Mamo had secured funding from the Ministry of Health to start LFCC, similar to other clinics at that time in Toronto and Kingston. Judge Genest recognized the complex needs of youth before the court and advocated for a dedicated, specialized mental health service and enhanced collaboration with other social service, mental health and justice partners. LFCC began with offices on the first floor of the courthouse – we had an amazing administrative manager we stole from Vanier's and 3 exceptional social workers (including the late Wayne Willis). The rest is history as LFCC flourished in its work in training, research and expanding assessments and clinical practices with civil, criminal and child protection matters across Ontario and Canada. We were invited to present our research and do training across the globe.*

*I left LFCC in 2005 for a position at Western but am blessed to still be around LFCC as a senior consultant and proud to be part of the newest offspring, Navigating Onward. At Navigating Onward, I am supporting Kim Harris and her staff in taking on parenting disputes and expert witness testimony. At LFCC I have worked on 2 major grants in the past year. We just completed a grant with MCCSS examining the prevention of child homicides through a better implementation of death review recommendations completed by the Chief Coroner. We also completed a grant through the Department of Justice on a [review of the literature on parenting plans after court findings of family violence](#).*

*I have enjoyed staying connected with LFCC and working as a consultant with amazing staff there and at NavOn. The staff and students keep me young with the variety of projects and challenging court cases. I still have the same passion as I did when I started but need more naps and have to stop working by 9 pm!*