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2020/2021

Calgary Alternative Support Services

Annual General Report

A Message from the CASS Senior Leadership Team

The 2020-2021 fiscal year proved to be an unprecedented and difficult time for Calgary Alternative Support Services, the CASS community, and everyone. The sudden onset of the Covid-19 pandemic required the CASS Senior Leadership Team to quickly shift our focus from previously identified strategic objectives to navigating the organization through a pandemic. It has been a remarkable journey and it is hard to believe that it has been over a year since the Covid-19 pandemic began. The CASS Senior Leadership Team would like to reach out to all of our staff to express our deep gratitude for all that they do for both clients and each other. The entire CASS community continues to demonstrate exceptional resiliency and dedication as we work through this global pandemic together.



Our resiliency as an organization and as a community has led to great accomplishments and successes this year. To name a few; the development of a robust Pandemic Plan, safety protocols, procurement, and deployment of vast quantities of Personal Protective Equipment, the development of reliable supply chains, and significantly modified program operations in order to continually meet the needs of the individuals we support safely during a pandemic. CASS successfully completed two separate accreditation processes which you can read more about in the section titled [Accreditation](#) on the next page. Our administration team has worked endlessly on a variety of projects while also maintaining day to day operations in support of programs, staff and ultimately the individuals that CASS supports, which you can read more about in the section titled [CASS Administrative Services](#)

CASS conducted an anonymous Employee Engagement Survey which the CASS Senior Leadership Team used to inform the development of the CASS 2021-2022 Strategic Plan. Throughout this process, the CASS Senior Leadership Team has identified areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement for our upcoming year.

We know that this is an exceptionally challenging time for everyone. It is also important to feel hopeful and to be proud of all that we have achieved this past year. Please stay safe, wash your hands, wear a mask, and reach out for help if needed.

Projects & Initiatives

The CASS Newsletter

The Covid-19 pandemic required that we digitize the CASS Report instead of printing and mailing. The CASS Report remains a constant communication with all staff and clients. It has become a monthly contribution to the new CASS Website as a blog.

One of the clients supported by CASS practices her typing by preparing the report each month. Staff and clients are encouraged to contribute to the newsletter and a CADO supervisor edits and posts the newsletter to the CASS website (<https://c-a-s-s.org>).

This newsletter has been a great way for clients and staff to stay connected to what is happening at CASS and in the community. There may be fewer programs because of Covid-19, such as the Dinner Club, but we are finding new ways to stay connected and activities to participate in. One such addition are our activity packages, which includes colouring pages, mazes, and puzzles and often creates opportunities for clients to contribute to the newsletter.

For example, clients were challenged to write their own six word memoirs to help make sense of this moment in history.

A contributor to the newsletter wrote *"I wish this were over forever"*.

Client Christmas Hampers

Annually since 2004 CASS staff raise funds to support some of our most vulnerable clients throughout the Christmas Season.

Normally the CASS Christmas Hampers are distributed to approximately 25 individuals. For the 2020 Christmas season CASS distributed 54! Our hampers consist of a gift card for grocery shopping and a gift. CASS program staff shop on behalf of the individuals they nominate, so gifts are personally chosen.

This undertaking was started by CASS staff and is funded through a variety of staff initiatives. This project is very important to us and will continue to be a seasonal priority.

Accreditation

Amidst the pandemic, CASS was required to complete two different accreditation surveys required by two different CASS funders. Both funders fall under the Government of Alberta, Ministry of Community & Social Services. Under this umbrella CASS receives funding from [Disability Service \(DS\)](#) and the [Calgary Homeless Foundation \(CHF\)](#).

In July, CASS completed the survey for DS. This survey was administered by the [Alberta Council of Disability Services \(ACDS\)](#), Creating Excellence Together (CET) standards. Our CHF funded programs accreditation was administered in August by the [Canadian Accreditation Council \(CAC\)](#).

These accreditations focus on Organizational Framework, Quality of Service, and Quality of Life. CASS's policies and infrastructure were evaluated, but more importantly, CASS clients and staff were interviewed to evaluate their view of CASS service and support.

These surveys have always occurred every 3 years. However, the modifications required due to the pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge. Even with the additional challenges the accreditation for all DS (PDD) and CHF (CAPSH) funded programs were a huge success.

For the first time in CASS history, the CET accreditation received 100% in all areas of review while also achieving our 'Complex Needs' designation. The CAC accreditation results for CAPSH programs were also a huge success with a result of 100%. CASS is so proud to have this level of service recognized by our accrediting bodies. Especially while navigating such an uncertain time.

Senior Leadership attributes this tremendous success to all of our amazing staff and stakeholders. We could not have made it through this trying process without you!

CASS Website

After 12 years in service, the previous CASS website was getting pretty long in the tooth. In 2020 the CASS Communications Committee worked with a pair of website developers to give our website <https://c-a-s-s.org/> an overhaul. The new website went live on June 1st of 2020 and we are extremely happy with the new look and feel and our blog has never been so lively!

Projects & Initiatives Continued

Spinz-A-Round

In January and February of 2020, CASS continued to participate in the [spinz-a-round](#) program through partnership with the Community Kitchen Program of Calgary. CASS representatives and coordinators, John and Alexis would go to the Spinz program every Tuesday morning to acquire a truckload of food and bring it back to the CASS office. This is food that has been donated by several members of the community (Beatrice, Community Natural Foods, etc) to the community kitchen for distribution to participating agencies. Very often, this is food that is not able to be sold in store (e.g. nearing expiry, box slightly damaged, etc) but is still of good quality and being diverted from the landfill.

During January and February, this food was brought to the CASS office where many volunteer agency staff, coordinators, and clients assisted with the unloading and distribution of food. CASS clients in need were welcomed to the CASS office to access this resource. Being able to access this food at CASS assisted many CASS clients to acquire healthy food and ease strain on their budget. The program also provides for a social opportunity and community building for our CASS community.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, and resultant closure of the CASS office, we were unfortunately no longer able to welcome clients and staff to the CASS office. This resulted in a temporary suspension of the spinz-a-round program while we adjusted to the new realities of a worldwide pandemic. CASS continued to recognize that this is an extremely valuable program that assists and supports our clients to be able to better achieve food security.

In April/May 2020, CASS coordinator John and CAPSH staff Lance resumed the spinz program in an altered way. The community kitchen program implemented numerous safety protocol and completely changed the way the program operates in order to ensure agencies could safely continue to come and distribute food to those in need.

John and Lance fill Lance's large van with food and then distribute it to Stepping Stone Manor (John) and Langin

Place (Lance). CAPSH staff and clients then sort and distribute this food.

This has continued every Tuesday, without interruption (including some very cold days). Throughout the operation of this program (both before and during the pandemic) CASS has received further donations from COBBS bread which has allowed us to distribute fresh baked bread to our clients.

The community kitchen staff, Steve and Alfredo have run this program for many years and have been incredible partners to staff. They are always extremely accommodating and friendly and have been very kind and generous to the CASS community over the many years we have partnered with them.

Clients who used to come to the CASS office to obtain spinz food have been able to make requests for food when needed, and have it delivered to their home. John has occasionally put extra food aside and arranged delivery to these client's homes to ensure that clients still have access to nutritious food.



Figure 1 - Spinz-A-Round Warehouse

The PPE Procurement & Distribution Experience

In March of 2020, CASS, like all other organizations found ourselves struggling to procure the appropriate PPE for our staff. Our Senior Leadership Team hit the ground running quickly securing gloves, cleanser, gowns and hand sanitizer. Our first orders for cleanser and PPE products were placed on March 10, 2020.

During the initial stages of the Pandemic CASS formed partnerships with local charity organizations and businesses because we recognized that the normal supply chains were not going to be available to us.

Donations

[Medical Mercy Canada](#) – donated disposable masks and isolation gowns to CASS in mid-March. These items were distributed to our Overnight Staffed Residences (OSRs) as well as our Permanent Supportive Housing settings Langin Place and Stepping Stone Manor.

[Patterson Dental](#) donated PPE and set the standard for what continues to be distributed to our front-line staff.

Business Partnerships

[Custom Cut Threads](#) was contracted to make CASS isolation gowns.

[Prince Anything](#) was contracted to custom make 3D-printed face shields

[Canadian Mask Supply](#) (CMS) – CASS purchased 1200 masks at a discounted rate to be distributed to clients and staff in all program areas. CMS continues to give CASS staff a 30% discount on purchases. CMS also donated children's masks for CASS to distribute.

Receiving and Distributing PPE

CASS receives disposable masks from Alberta Health Services on a bi-weekly basis as well as other PPE items ordered through the Government of Alberta.

We have established a healthy inventory of all things required to keep our clients and staff safe while at home and in the community. The PPE supplies have allowed us to keep up and excel with ongoing changes to Public Health orders.

In April of 2020 we began bi-weekly distribution of PPE available to all Employees, Support Home Providers and Supportive Neighbours.

October 2020 was the month we established safe transportation guidelines as well as the fogging of the Main Office location with Vital Oxide. Car care kits were developed and distributed to all staff providing transportation to clients. Vital Oxide applications also began at Landin Place and Stepping Stone Manor.

The day program and residential coordinator groups were issued their own PPE refresh containers to top up staff supplies while doing community and home visits.

In December 2020 CASS created a ppe@c-a-s-s.org email address for individuals and coordinators to request supplies. This email account is monitored by our PPE procurement and distribution team.

January of 2021 we introduced weekly Vital Oxide fogging into our OSR settings

Over the past year CASS has distributed approximately:

- 800 Re useable masks
- 74,580 Disposable masks
- 200L of Hand sanitizer
- 172 L of Vital Oxide
- 300 Safety glasses
- 35,200 Gloves
- 125 Car kits
- 160L of Lysol



Figure 2 - PPE Delivery

Calgary Alternative Day Options

This past year Calgary Alternative Day Options (CADO) has been a glowing example of our ingenuity and ability to adapt to our community support needs. In March of 2020, CADO was flung into the unknown with the onset of the pandemic. How can a community access program access the community, when it is in lockdown? The answer came from both our staff and clients: we created our own community. Through use of technology such as Zoom, we were able to continue to provide support to our CADO clients. Connection is one of our main goals in CADO: our program seeks to mitigate isolation and promote community inclusion for the folks we serve. Although we were unable to do this in the way we were used to, CADO found ways to connect with each other through technology and safe in-person interaction.



In the spring, CADO organized virtual show & tells and talent shows, and played games together online. We had online dance parties together and did costume dress-up days. In the summer, we went outside to paint rocks, go hiking, explore our neighbourhoods and spend time together in the park. The fall and winter presented weather related challenges, but we found volunteering jobs, learned new culinary skills, played card games and made it work. Although CADO looks different than it did last year, we found new skills and celebrated our dedication to the work we do.

CADO's current staffing component consists of an amazing team with four Community Support Coordinators, one Activity and Volunteer Facilitator and 63 Community Support Workers.

Throughout the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year, the CADO program supported 71 clients to access their community.

Program Modifications during the Pandemic

Services are continually being adjusted based on the participation level of clients. In-person, socially distanced support is offered, and if the client is ready, the support staff will facilitate.

All support staff providing in-person support have the required PPE for them and clients to be safe.



All in-person supports were provided in-home or within walking distance from the client's home. Environmental scans were completed in clients' neighbourhoods to survey all community-based resources within walking distance of client's homes. This information will be used going forward as in-person support becomes the primary level of support again.

All individuals receiving support have developed activity schedules that explain what supports are provided. Specific details in the activity schedules track what the remote and in-person services are. There are shared exercise classes, video gaming, group chats with peers, reading books, watching movies, and learning to cook. Activity packages have been developed and delivered to clients based on client requests and remote participation with staff.

Figure 3 - Day Program Participants and Activities



In late 2019, the Director of Calgary Alternative Employment Services (CAES) moved on from CASS to pursue new endeavors. Sean McEwen was the founder, and original Program Manager / Director of the Employment Program at CASS. He was a great asset to CASS and his departure was a true loss for the agency.

In May, CAES experienced the resignation of three key senior staff who moved on, to also pursue new endeavors. This was not unexpected, due to the extremely uncertain times of the pandemic. However, another significant loss to the program.

Throughout 2020, and early into 2021, CAES recruited nine new team members. This recruitment was due, in part, to staff moving on, but also due to program growth. In early 2021 CAES continued to diversify its funding by being awarded a new contract through the Government of Alberta. Current funding, with the addition of new funding, allows us to serve close to 200 individuals in the employment program. This is an achievement in itself for the program.

As with all CASS programs, the employment program responded to the pandemic by modifying service delivery in numerous ways. The majority of services became virtual with the inability to provide in-person support. Initially this was a big challenge as the modifications were required to occur quickly. However, the amazing team rose to the challenge and were developing and delivering virtual workshops within the first month of the initial shut down. This platform has grown and developed into an extraordinarily successful endeavor for both the clients and program staff. We are currently delivering three to four workshops per week focusing on the development of both hard and soft skills, adding to both personal and professional growth for the clients. The results, of which, have been extremely positive for the program at large.

As the saying goes, when one door closes, more open! This sentiment was evident and truly prevailing for our employment program in 2020 / 2021.

Most importantly, CAES remains committed to facilitating supported employment. This is a commitment to our clients, employers, guardians, funders, and all respective stakeholders.



We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all who have shown continued support for the work we do. It is instrumental to the reality of Supported Inclusive Employment.

Figure 4 - The Supported Employment Team

Calgary Alternative Residential Services

Calgary Alternative Residential Services (CARS) provides residential and community based supports to individuals with developmental disabilities. CARS is the founding program of CASS and has been providing supports to adults in the community since 1988. Support is provided in outreach, support home, and overnight staffed home models. By engaging in individual planning with the clients in the program, supports are catered to the needs of each of the individuals we support. The ultimate goal of the program is to assist the people we serve to live as independently as possible.



The 2020-2021 fiscal year brought many unique challenges to the CARS program. Support models were adjusted to ensure all clients and staff were kept as safe as possible, by following all mandated restrictions and public health orders. CARS continued to provide support to all program clients, some at full capacity and some with modifications. Program staff and sub-contractors showed amazing creativity, flexibility and resilience as they continued to work as essential workers throughout the pandemic. Despite some positive Covid-19 cases, the efforts made to follow public health guidelines prevented any cases being spread between staff and clients; something we are very proud of.

2020-2021 Fiscal Year

The CARS program served 138 people in the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Though CARS remained closed to intake, a few clients from other CASS programs were admitted. CARS had significant staff changes in the office in 2020-2021. Two Coordinators left to pursue other opportunities and a maternity leave, while two long time CASS staff from our CAPA program moved into the CARS program. The team also saw two new Coordinators join in the fall. The final transition that happened in 2020-2021 was the hiring of long time CARS Coordinator Alicia Baker as a Program Coordinator to assist the Director of Residential Services with the day-to-day operations of the program. With all of this transition comes renewed energy and enthusiasm and the team is looking forward to all of the exciting change to come.



Figure 5 - CARS Success Story

Success Story

Scott has cerebral palsy and has always considered his workouts with a personal trainer to be the cornerstone of his strength and independence. He would go to the gym regularly to work with a trainer so he could maintain this as his body can get weak without regular strength training. When Covid-19 restrictions shut down fitness facilities in Calgary, Scott worked quickly to find a way to continue to exercise. With perseverance and a lot of effort, Scott and his support staff were able to gain approved access for the trainer to come to his supportive housing building for weekly training. His ability to continue to exercise throughout the pandemic has ensured his physical and mental well-being.

Projects & Initiatives

In 2020 two of our Support Home Providers (SHP) came forward and requested some assistance in starting up a Support Home Provider Peer Group. The intention of the group is to provide a safe, supportive and non-judgmental space for SHP and supportive neighbours to connect and share.

"As peers, our hope is that we can show up for each other and offer ideas and strategies that we pull from our own lived experience. We need community and connection now more than ever!" – Support Home Provider Sarah McMillen

The first meeting was held in December 2020 and was attended by five Support Home Providers discussing a variety of resources and self-care ideas. They were able to assist one SHP with a question about navigating systems and problem solve some positive solutions. The organizers heard later that they had a successful outcome to their situation. We expect these meetings to occur regularly going forward as the number of participants grows.

Calgary Alternative Permanent Supportive Housing



CAPSH programs are permanent supportive housing funded by the [Calgary Homeless Foundation](#) with a harm reduction and housing-first philosophy. The program operates out of two community buildings:

Langin Place in partnership with [Calgary Housing Company](#) has been operated by CASS for over 25 years now. It is a permanent supportive housing program for 53 single men experiencing homelessness due to mental health and /or addictions challenges.

Stepping Stone Manor in partnership with [Home Space](#) has been operated by CASS for three years now for single men and women experiencing homelessness due to mental health and /or addictions challenges.

CAPSH provides 24/7 staffing coverage with a minimum of two staff per shift. Programing includes: case management, general life skills support, eviction prevention, crafts and activities, support and advocacy with community, crisis intervention, outreach services, nutrition supports, safety and security.

CAPSH is required to undergo accreditation every three years by the Canadian Accreditation Council based on specific case management criteria. These standards are available for viewing on the [Calgary Homeless Foundation website](#). In August of 2020, both programs passed accreditation with flying colors thanks to the Langin and Stepping Stone Teams.

Our pandemic year has required extra effort by staff to ensure Covid-19 protocols are followed. Sanitation and signage were increased to promote safe practice by staff and tenants, and extra sanitization protocols have been added to our routine. All of our staff and tenants have been working together to adhere to Covid safety protocols.

The past year has been a difficult one and has resulted in a considerable amount of stress for both tenants and staff. CAPSH Staff stepped up to the new normal by being creative. Langin received permission for tenants to do a wall mural down a main hallway in the building. Stepping Stone had numerous low contact events with prizes. At Christmas, hot turkey dinners and gifts were provided to tenants in both locations.

CAPSH was also successful in an application for grant money to purchase portable DVD players for tenants who, like the rest of us, found themselves needing to spend a lot more time at home during the pandemic. This innovative idea which was supported by the Calgary Homeless Foundation helped us to ensure that the tenants at Langin Place and Stepping Stone manor were able to enjoy some of the same things that we all take for granted.

Amidst fatigue and anxiety, CASS staff delivered amazing supportive and creative programming in 2020-21. Kudos to all the CAPSH team for their compassion and endless drive to ensure tenants received what they needed, regardless of what was, or was not happening in the community service industry. Every night at 7 pm the pot banging and cheers for

front line workers included CAPSH staff.

There have been many positive highlights in this extremely stressful year for the people we serve. These include: continued programming, engagement, conflict resolution, new relationships (even in lockdown!), story sharing, peer support and compassion for one another.

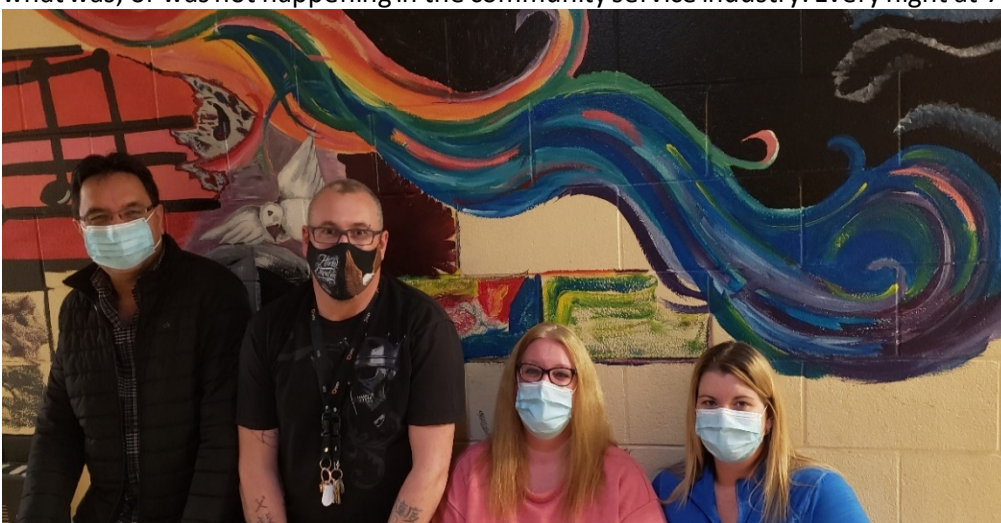


Figure 6 - Mural in progress at Langin Place

Calgary Alternative Poss-Abilities

Calgary Alternative Poss-Abilities (CAPA) has been providing support to youth and adults in the community of Calgary since 2007. CAPA receives funding from multiple sources such as; [Calgary Fetal Alcohol Network \(CFAN\)](#), Disability Innovations Fund, and individual grants.



The CAPA program provides ongoing case management, outreach, and support navigating government and other support systems for individuals with multiple diagnoses who are marginally ineligible for PDD services. Areas of support include but are not limited to: addictions, assessment, daily living management, education, employment, financial, housing, health & wellness, justice, systems navigation, parenting and relationships.

2020-2021 Fiscal Year

The CAPA team supported 74 clients throughout the 2020-2021 reporting year.

The CAPA program has seen some staffing changes over this past year and a half. Three veteran Community Support Coordinators transferred to work in in our residential services program (CARS), providing the opportunity to add some new Coordinators to the team.

CAPA is currently staffed by four full-time Coordinators, two part-time Coordinators, one part-time Intake Facilitator, three Support Home Providers, five Supportive Neighbours, and three Community Support Workers.

Program Operations during the Pandemic

The CAPA program has had a busy year! We were able to quickly pivot supports during the pandemic to ensure that all clients received the support they needed. March 13, 2020 CAPA program operations were modified to maintain the safety of clients and staff. All non-essential in-person support was suspended. Community Support Coordinators focused on providing support remotely when possible. Day to day support needs did not stop due to the pandemic and we continued to assist clients with locating housing, moving, medical appointments, assessments and legal support. Some legal proceedings had to be postponed and other cases were supported over the phone or by email due to the temporary closure of the Calgary Courts Centre. Foodbank referrals increased and Coordinators ensured clients received the food they needed to survive. Pick-up and delivery needs were modified for safety protocols.

Projects & Initiatives

- 12 new referrals were brought into service
- CASS was able to distribute re-usable masks to all CAPA clients
- 14 CAPA clients in need received CASS Christmas Hampers
- CAPA program staff participated in the CFAN Program Evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation was to gather experiences shared by CFAN funded agencies, receive suggestions, recommendations and determine how CFAN can enhance the quality and effectiveness of the services provided.

Success Story

"When Blake started receiving support in the CAPA program he was struggling to learn how to be a single parent to four children, all with various disabilities, while also balancing a full-time job. With the strategies that came along with his diagnostic assessment, Blake developed INCREDIBLE organizational skills to help keep his family's life in order. He has also impressively grown into his role as a parent - not only supporting all of his children, but also the additional children of his current partner whom he has basically adopted as his own. Blake has done phenomenal work on himself to bring him to where he is today. When he originally started in the CAPA program he needed daily supports in many different areas of his life. Blake is now quite independent and only needs occasional help, usually in the form of going for coffee with his staff."

Creative Community Living Activities (CCLA)



Creative Community Living Activities (CCLA) is an [Alberta Health Services](#) funded community based long-term therapeutic day program for adults living with severe and persistent mental illness. The focus is on sustaining participants' health and wellbeing by giving them the skills to manage their lives in order to avoid, or minimize, the need for crisis intervention and hospitalizations. CCLA strives to improve participants' quality of life by reducing isolation and providing a safe environment where program participants can experience a sense of community and an opportunity to develop friendships.

As with many other services, In March of 2020, operations were modified as a result of the pandemic. On-site support was suspended and staff shifted to providing remote telephone support for clients. The modifications were challenging; however, remote support proved to be a viable option. For program participants, the isolation of staying at home was monumental. The remote support we were able to offer enabled them to adjust to being at home and to support them with developing new coping strategies.

In June of 2020 a gradual re-opening of CCLA began. Participants of each group were divided into two groups with a rotating week on, week off, on-site schedule. CCLA staff followed suit. Instead of regular full groups on site with two staff, program staff alternated with a week on, week off, on-site schedule. CCLA staff who were not physically on site at the CCLA office continued to offer remote telephone support to participants. Returning back to on-site support brought the additional challenges of required sanitizing and PPE. Protocols for daily screening, continuous masking, and heightened sanitizing were implemented. We are so pleased to know that, to date, our efforts have been successful in keeping all program and participants and staff healthy and safe.



Figure 7 - CCLA Hallway with Social Distancing Stickers

CASS leadership and CCLA staff would like to acknowledge the contributions that program participants have made to the program throughout the pandemic. Their support of CASS, support for each other, and unwavering compliance for public health orders has been an amazing success for the program

Success Story

It seems very relevant to highlight one success story, witnessed, as a result of the program modifications. One participant in the Wellness group, Joseph, took it upon himself to keep in touch with members of the groups which he attended at CCLA. Joseph offered extra support to other participants by phoning them on their mutual group days. Joseph also offered ideas of how to keep the participants occupied while being at home with some easy craft ideas.

Money Matters

Money Matters was a joint venture partnership operating in collaboration with [Alberta Heath Services \(AHS\)](#), [Momentum](#), and [Calgary Alternative Support Services Inc.](#)

The Money Matters program provided Money Management Education and Financial Management Assistance to people with mental health challenges.

The Money Matters program operated in two distinct parts: Money Management Education and Financial Administration. Together they assisted individuals to develop the skills and knowledge to not only improve their financial circumstances, but also to improve their overall life management and well-being.



On April 1, 2020 the Money Matters Program transitioned to a part time program, supporting 20 individuals. Over the last year Money Matters supported 20 clients with Financial Administration as well as assisting new partner organizations to develop their programs. Due to some significant changes to the funding of the program, CASS made the very difficult decision to close program operations after 17 years. CASS' involvement as a service delivery partner in the Money Matters program ended effective March 31, 2021.

In March of 2020, program modifications were made due to Covid-19, and all non-essential in-person support was suspended. The Money Matters program was quick to adapt to the climate of the pandemic. Processes were changed with client and staff safety in mind.

Some areas of providing financial administration were significantly more difficult to perform in a remote and distanced manner but the creativity of program staff made it all possible. We were even able to deliver two Christmas Hampers to program participants.

We are proud to celebrate that Financial Wellness scores from Money Matters program remained stable or increased during 2020-2021. New referrals were brought into service and all the necessary steps of working with clients, [AISH](#), CPP and the [CIBC](#) were successfully established and new accounts became active.

[Momentum](#), (the program funder), will continue to operate the Money Matters program with four new partner organizations. The [Calgary John Howard Society](#), [The Alex](#), a yet to be named agency, and [YWCA](#). In total, 80 financial administration participants will be supported in Calgary under the new contract model. Throughout the last 17 years that CASS has been involved in delivering the Money Matters program, there has constantly been a high need recognized financial administration support in Calgary. The value and quality programming of Financial Administration support at CASS was captured in the Momentum 2017 program analysis report.

Although the Money Matters program concluded at the end of March, we are proud of the positive impact we have had on the people we serve, and continue to celebrate their successes.

Success Story

Throughout the program's seventeen-year history, Money Matters has been proud to share many participant success stories, and this year is no exception: Lynn was a participant who started Money Matters Financial Administration in 2015. When she first joined the program, Lynn had thousands of dollars in debt and bankruptcy was recommended. Most of the debt existed in the form of a \$14,000 Canada Pension Plan benefits overpayment to Service Canada. After reviewing the debts, the Financial Administrator pointed out that the debt could be addressed through a Service Canada Appeals Panel. The client agreed that pursuing the appeals process was more suitable than filing for bankruptcy. After a five year journey, Lynn was successful in winning her case and the \$14,000 debt was fully waived. Additionally, \$56,000 was approved for backdated Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits. Since graduating from Money Matters, Lynn has succeeded greatly in life. She's started her own small business and ran as a candidate in the 2019 provincial election. To quote Lynn "Your support over the years of appeal battle gave me the courage to keep fighting."

As a result of the worldwide pandemic, closures of our community, and increasing anxiety and turmoil, CASS began offering mental health support to its members in creative ways online. CASS YouTube Mindfulness and Mental Health Videos were one of the ways we facilitated this. In these videos, our counselling therapist Melanie teamed up with the intake coordinator/team leader at CAES on a weekly basis to discuss mental health concerns related to the pandemic, describe coping strategies, and facilitate a relevant mindfulness practice. These short videos were recorded and posted on [CASS' YouTube channel](#). Over time, videos included interviews with CASS clients and other staff members, but continued to focus on coping with mental health challenges related to the pandemic. To date, 36 videos have been recorded and posted.

Another way we addressed mental health support was through weekly supportive emails. Melanie wrote these emails to CASS staff with the theme of “managing stress in times of uncertainty”. These emails included encouragement and coping strategies for issues relating to the pandemic, including loneliness, stress, anxiety, anger, relationships, and communication. To date, 37 emails have been sent. Melanie’s emails have been posted on [CASS' blog page](#) for the larger CASS community and general public.

In addition to the above initiatives, CASS has again partnered with [Supported Lifestyles Ltd.](#) in providing two online adapted [dialectical behavior therapy](#) workshops. These drop-in weekly workshops, called Wellness Wednesdays, have provided approximately 10 clients with a source of mental health support where they can talk about their feelings, share resources, and learn new strategies for managing intense emotions.

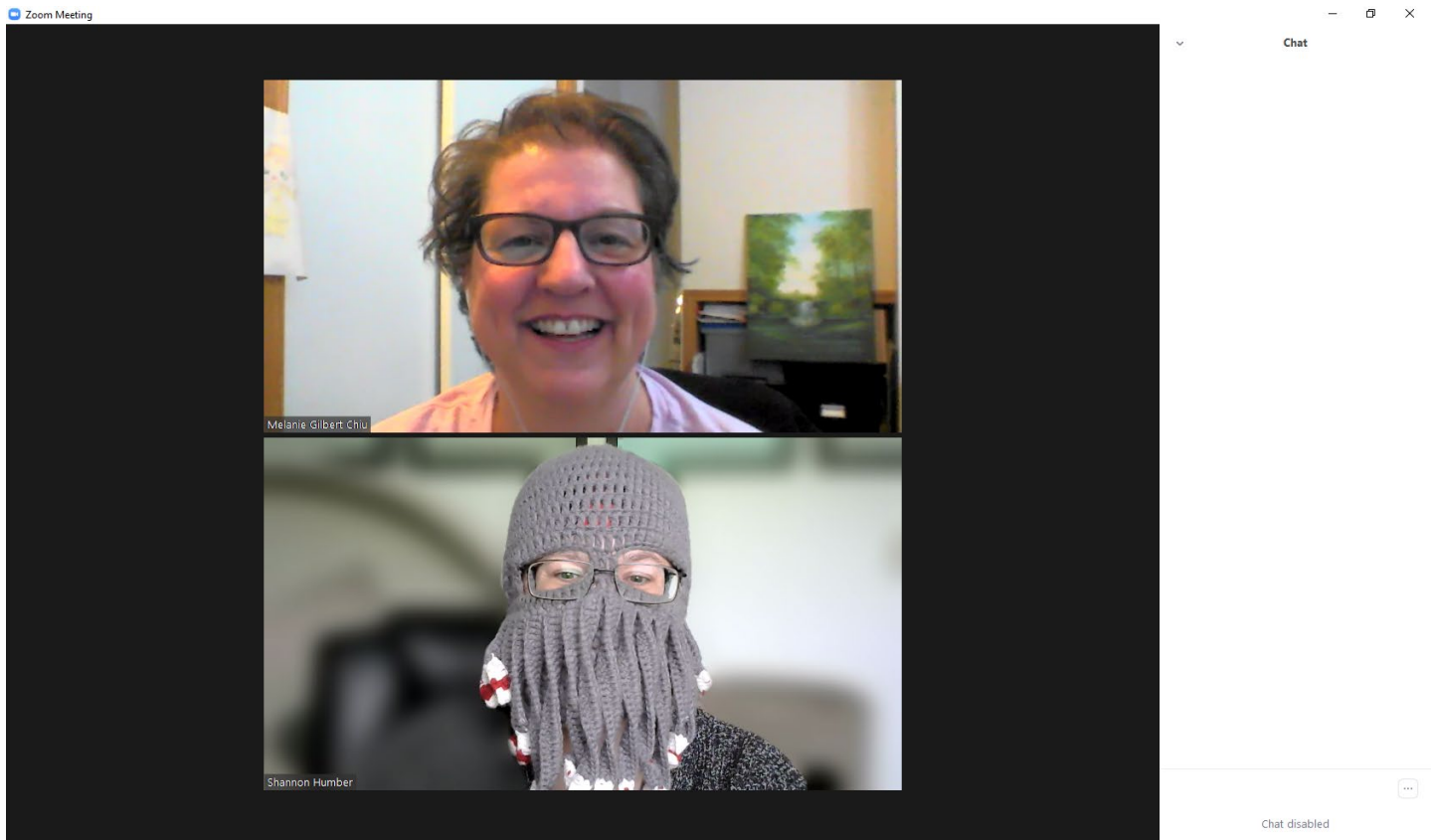


Figure 8 - Screenshot from Mental Health and Mindfulness YouTube Series with Melanie and Shannon



Figure 9 - The CASS Administration Team (click on each headshot for description of the individual - only in Adobe Reader)

The CASS Administration Team is comprised of Reception, Human Resources, Accounting, Payroll, and Information Technology and presently consists of thirteen individuals. Each of these sub-teams work together collaboratively in support of agency staff and programs to meet their needs and empower them in their own respective missions.

The CASS Admin Team is engaged in ongoing professional development and critical analysis of our processes and practices in the pursuit of continual improvement so that we can better support the needs of programs, staff and clients.

In 2020, the CASS Administration Team held our first strategic planning session which resulted in the development of our own Vision Mission and Mandate in addition to a strategic plan.

2020-2021 Fiscal Year by the Numbers

Over the course of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the CASS Administration Team worked with CASS' seven program areas and our many funders to:

- Support **226** active employees and **78** Support Home Providers/Supportive Neighbours
- Support CASS' seven programs in the hiring of **51** individuals which kept our total employee population steady
- Facilitate the receipt and disposition of \$15,971,371.52 to support individuals with disabilities
- Process roughly **3264** staff time sheets in order to pay out **\$8,427,179.00** in gross pay to employees
- Process **1620** Support Home Provider payments for a total of **\$5,536,661.00**
- Successfully resolve **888** HelpDesk tickets submitted by staff
- Host **2232** Zoom meetings, for a cumulative total of **569,366** minutes between all participants
- Send **547** documents to be signed digitally using the DocuSign electronic signature service

Projects & Initiatives

Supporting Agency Programs and Staff in the Context of a Pandemic

The corona virus pandemic challenged each member of the CASS Admin Team to keep things as normal as possible for the programs and staff we support, with the goal of ensuring that any disruption to service delivery would be minimized. With the agency theme for 2020 of ‘#resilienttogether’ in mind, the Admin Team not only continued with ongoing major projects but took on several new initiatives. The work of the team has not only carried out our new vision and mission, but has endeavoured to minimize any disruption to agency staff.

As everyone can relate to, Zoom meetings became common place. The Admin Team increased the frequency of our team meetings from once a month to every two weeks to ensure that projects and initiatives were kept on track and that support for all staff was consistent. The CASS Admin Team also initiated a weekly virtual happy hour on Fridays and a weekly Monday morning coffee virtual get-together over Zoom in order to keep our team spirit and comradery alive while we were unable to meet in person.

While office staff were supported to work from home the Admin Team continued in the office on alternating days. Robust safety protocols were developed and enacted in order to ensure the safety of staff that were required to be on site at the CASS Main Office. Plexi-glass barriers were erected, one way hallways and stair wells were established, signage was posted, screening questionnaires were put into place, sanitization resources including electro-static foggers and air purifiers were purchased, sanitization logs were established, safe transport and package delivery protocols were developed and much more.

Our IT department worked overtime to ensure that both clients and staff had access to the resources that they needed. We worked feverishly to procure and deploy Laptops, webcams, WiFi network adapters, headphones and other IT hardware, which were in short supply worldwide, to dozens of employees across all of our various program areas and work sites. Staff were supported to access resources remotely, to setup their mobile devices, and to route incoming calls on our phone system to their cell phones. New software solutions for video conferencing and digital signature services were explored and deployed. Expense claims went from being issued via cheque and mailed via Canada Post to being issued via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The pandemic accelerated our adoption of a variety of technologies which has improved our flexibility, capacity, and resiliency in the long term.

This year with all of its challenges has proven just how resilient this team is - we are proud of the accomplishments we have made and look forward to another year of successes!

Going Live with Sparkrock Finance Update and Ongoing Work on Human Resources / Payroll Module

Throughout 2020 we worked hard on upgrading our Sparkrock Finance Module as a pre-requisite for the implementation of our Human Resource / Payroll and Scheduling Module. After an incredible amount of planning, hard work, and coordination, the upgraded Finance Module went live in November of 2020.

The Human Resources / Payroll and Scheduling Module remains a work in progress and while we are a little bit behind schedule, we are committed to getting this project right. The anticipated go-live date for this next module is in early summer of 2021 with an exact date to be determined soon. When that happens, it will be the first time in the history of CASS that our Human Resources, Payroll, and Finance systems will be integrated and cloud based which will create all kinds of new efficiencies and possibilities for CASS. This project represents a tremendous investment in CASS’ administrative infrastructure, and we can’t wait to see all of our hard work come to fruition later this year.