



Child **40**
1981 • 2021
Witness
Centre

40th Anniversary Edition

Annual Report
2021-22



Our Vision

Building resiliency and creating strong futures with children, youth, and their families in our communities.

Our Mission

The Child Witness Centre provides caring and compassionate support, education, and advocacy for children, youth, and their families in our communities as they journey through the criminal justice process.

Values

At Child Witness Centre, we are a team of compassionate and diverse members who utilize trauma-informed practice to provide tailored support to children, youth, and their families.

We are guided by the following values in all the work we do: Inclusivity · Integrity · Collaboration · Respect · Resiliency



"The children we work with are our heroes. They were successful the day they told somebody that something happened to them."

Jo-Anne Hughes

Founding Member & Past Staff Member

[Watch Jo-Anne's video on our YouTube channel](#)

"Giving Children a Voice"

2021-22 Board of Directors

Our agency is led by a wonderful group of individuals whose service is invaluable. Your passion, dedication, and support is truly admirable. Thank you for all you do!

Officers

Bernadette Behm (Chair)
Lisa Allen (Past Chair)
Sharon Seifried (Vice Chair)
Dianne Romano (Treasurer)
Paula Fecteau (Secretary)

Directors

Mallory Allan
Tomas Blazejowski
Melissa Crowley
Lisa DeBaets
Matthew Demarte
Lisa Goertz
Sloden Lackovic
Kelly McLachlin
Reid Pridham
Olivia Rogalla
Alice Schmidt Hanbidge
Ryan Selves
Chris Warden



Our 40th Year Serving Local Young Victims

Message from our Board Chair and Executive Director

As we celebrate what our organization accomplished in our 2021-22 fiscal year, we are honoured to share this annual report with you. In reflecting on, and summarizing this past year, themes that come to mind are **Collaboration, Resiliency, and Diversity**.

The demand for our services is undeniable. In 2021-22, we supported over 1,700 children and youth who were victims or witnesses of abuse or crime. In conjunction with supporting young people, we offered critical support to over 1,200 parents and caregivers. Our work helps to reduce the impact of trauma and can change the trajectory of a child's life for a better tomorrow, along with positively effecting their family members. Our support is also integral to the health and wellbeing of our community as a whole.

In the past year, we made tremendous strides toward organizational excellence, including the launch of our 2022-25 strategic plan with our re-envisioned vision, mission, and values. Together, these statements will keep us focused on what we are trying to achieve and where we are heading. We are already seeing fruit from our labour, and would like to share a few examples.

Building for our future by collaborating and engaging partners and the community to further strengthen the impact and value of our work

We are pleased to be a key partner in the All That Kids Can Be Service Network in Guelph and Wellington as supported by United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin. This **collaborative** consists of 10+ regional agencies working together with a common goal of enhancing wraparound care for at-risk children and youth, by building protective factors that mitigate the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) they have encountered. The intentionality of this work will build **resiliency** in children, enhance their wellbeing, and enable them to better handle life's challenges.

Empowering and engaging our staff and volunteers to focus on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We are grateful for funding that was provided by The Department of Justice Canada, as we were able to initiate work on our EDI work-plan in January 2022. Our board and staff have started our journey of

learning and unlearning in regards to racism and anti-oppression matters. We have more work to do, but our team is passionate about **diversity** and making deep changes within our agency and the community we support. Our team has formed an EDI committee and is championing this important work.

Strengthening our stability by solidifying our organizational structure and securing resources to support our activities now and into the future

Like many organizations, our agency has faced the challenges of staff changes and meeting demands with less resources. Indeed, the pandemic has made it difficult for us to sustain our fundraising goals. We have invested in a robust fundraising strategy, but will need to look at new ways of doing things in the future.



Bernadette Behm

Board Chair

What will remain constant is our belief that all young victims should find receiving support is a given, not a luxury. We will continue to advocate for the resources we need to ensure every child has access to the trauma-informed services they need in our community.



Kim Rodrigues

Executive Director

Our work is not completed in isolation and young people will experience better outcomes if we are united and work together in **collaboration**. We are grateful for the partnership of those who share a common vision of reducing the impact of trauma on young people. These include Waterloo Regional Police Service, Guelph Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police, Crown Attorney's Office, Family & Children's Services, Victim/Witness Assistance Program, and many others who support our work every day.

The foundation of our work will always be amplifying the voices of young victims. Moving forward, we will continue paying attention to the positives around us, recognizing the strengths we all bring, and finding solutions to help us carry out our work.



Judy Harding, Our Founder

The Story of How We Began 40 Years Ago

From a concerned citizen to a change-maker taking action for children: Judy Harding, our founder, wholeheartedly believed in children, their voice, and their healing. 40 years later, Child Witness Centre helps over 1,700 children and youth, and their families, in the community each year.

When Brian Harding, Judy's husband, was asked about her drive to make a change, he shared her perspective this way, "You have to do something about it. How can you sleep at night if you don't do something about it? You have to be a responsible Canadian citizen and do something. So Judy did."

Brian recounts the night in 1981 their lives became focused on protecting children. It seemed like any other rainy October night that Brian and Judy sat down after dinner in their home in Kitchener to watch the local news. This broadcast featured two stories about child sexual assault. One was about a man who sexually assaulted his two-year-old granddaughter. The other, Brian describes, was "A headline about a case in London, Ontario, where a stepfather had sexually abused his five stepdaughters. The perpetrator, the stepfather, got a very minimal sentence. Judy was totally enraged that something like this could happen and only a minimal sentence be handed out. She said, 'We gotta do something about this, Brian.'"

Judy felt an urgency and she took action. She created a petition protesting the lenient sentences given to the perpetrators and went door to door on that dark and rainy October night collecting signatures, while Brian

stayed home with their children. Still reflecting on that night, Brian said, "Judy came home within an hour and needed to write up more copies of the petition."

Residents were stepping up and rallying together; many of them took copies of the petition to their workplaces to collect more signatures. Judy was overwhelmed with how supportive people were. This topic was close to home for parents, grandparents, educators, and anyone with a heart for children. It was an issue that had been ongoing, and the community was more than ready to support Judy's efforts to make a difference.

"And next thing you know, you look back, there are not two people there, there's a crowd", Brian recounts. Within the next few weeks, 40,000 signatures were gathered between Waterloo Region and London, Ontario. From there, they got an appointment with Minister of Justice at the time, Jean Chrétien, at his office on Parliament Hill.

Brian was part of the group that drove to Ottawa. He recalls they had to get creative when binding the petitions: "We were leaving, and somebody said, 'How are we going to bind all these?' We had a stack of all these sheets with the names on them. I said, 'You know what, we will punch holes in them, and you gals can tie them together with Jason's hockey laces.' So that's what they did. Here we are driving down the 401, and they're sitting in the back feeding hockey laces through all the sheets."

Following the presentation in Ottawa, Jean Chrétien agreed there were inconsistencies in the legal system regarding the severity of these crimes and the penalties given. It seemed that the court system was tilted in the perpetrators' favour. Chrétien offered his staff to work with Judy and the group on the matter and urged this issue to be pushed into the public eye.

Judy and Brian knew they could not do this alone. They wanted to engage community members, so they started to compile a team of volunteers in Waterloo Region to help build the organization. The team was specific about the type of volunteers they were looking for. "We wanted to choose volunteers who were thinking with their brain more than their gut feeling... If we are really going to move the yardsticks, you have to be professional, you have to be focused, and you need to execute on a plan to create change."

With passionate volunteers and the drive to make a change, Child Witness Centre (then known as Citizens Concerned with Crime against Children or '4Cs') began its journey to raise funds. During this crucial time, the community continued to step up. The first fundraiser, a dance, was made possible because of local citizens. Of course, there were monetary donations for the event, but what shocked the team the most was the number of non-monetary items donated. A local church offered the event space, residents donated food, a funeral home donated flowers, local stores donated prizes, and so on.

The organization ran solely on the goodwill of volunteers and community members for over 10 years before they had paid employees. The more traction the team got within the community, the harder they pushed. Brian said, "If you do well, that gives you the

motivation to push on to do more and do better, and that's basically how it all happened."

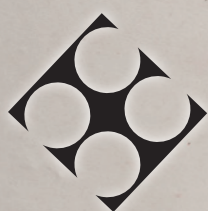
Judy and Brian went on to serve fervently with Child Witness Centre for decades. This included Judy being the executive director, and Brian being a board member for many years, before eventually passing their torches to new members. They were both pleased with how the organization was growing and flourishing. "We have talked about it. We are very proud of how this organization has grown. Starting at our dining room table to what it is today."

Judy passed away in January 2021, and is greatly missed by many. But her determination to advocate for the voices of children and youth will continue to have a positive ripple effect for many decades to come. Taking a moment to collect himself, Brian spoke from his heart, "Rest in peace, dear Judy. Your legacy will live on and benefit thousands of children."



[Watch Brian's video on our YouTube channel](#)

"How Judy Took Action for Young Victims"



4Cs
Citizens Concerned with
Crime against Children

Talk about a throwback! This logo was used until 2002 when we were renamed Child Witness Centre of Waterloo Region, to better describe the work of our agency. While our branding has changed over the years, our primary focus has remained constant – to support young victims or witnesses of abuse or crime.

Delivering Our Trauma-informed Services Continues

2021-22 proved to be our most challenging year yet, as we completed 40 years of serving the community. We supported an unprecedented number of children and youth – 1,781 young people across our two trauma-informed programs, representing a 14% increase from our previous year.

Our primary focus is the comfort, support, and provision of information for victimized young people and their families in Waterloo Region, Guelph, and Wellington County. This diminishes their sense of social isolation and improves their mental health and wellbeing.

We ensure immediate safety for the child or youth by providing crisis intervention, suicide assessments, safety planning, coping and regulation skills, as well as

harm reduction strategies. Self-care plans and coping strategies are provided to reduce their anxiety and improve self-esteem. As caregivers are provided with guidance and resources, they feel better equipped to support their child through the difficulties.

We offer a continuity of service from the start of the abuse investigation (through our **Child and Youth Advocate Program**) until the end of the court outcome (through our **Child Witness Program**). We listen to their concerns, seek to provide answers to their questions, provide advocacy on their behalf, and endeavor to make sure they feel included throughout the process. We provide critical support that is relevant to each person’s needs, lowering the risk of re-victimization, and empowering them with resiliency towards strong futures.

How clients are impacted by our work with them

1,781 children and youth and 1,232 parents and caregivers received support from our programs this past fiscal year. The demand for our services is **the highest** it has ever been.



BEFORE

being involved with our programs,
clients were worried about:

- *"Nobody believing me and that it was a lost cause."*
- *"What mistakes I would make in saying or doing something, being confused as to what's going on."*
- *"The process of court, times, dates, what things meant."*
- *"Emotional breakdown, unpreparedness, nervousness, etc."*
- *"Not having an understanding of how court went."*

AFTER

getting support, clients shared
how they were helped most:

- *"They gave me resources to calm myself, information and connections, and overall, the feeling that I was heard and supported."*
- *"My caseworker thoroughly explained how court worked and what I would be doing."*
- *"Being assured that, as a parent, I was doing what I needed to do to make sure my child was okay, and offering a lot of support."*
- *"They let me fully tell my side and made me feel comfortable."*
- *"My caseworker was always giving me updates and answering my questions whenever she could."*
- *"Was by my side the entire time, talked about things that weren't just court, gave me anxiety toys to help me."*
- *"Listened to me and was friendly, giving me fidgets and such."*



Child 
1981 • 2021
Witness
Centre

Building Resiliency and Creating Strong Futures

583

children and youth supported

364

parents and caregivers supported

1198

children and youth supported

868

parents and caregivers supported

Child & Youth Advocate Program

Support for young people and their families throughout investigations, regardless of whether charges are laid. Our clients find a listening ear and safe landing place, while also receiving professional input on how to move forward. Their needs are assessed and they are connected with other services in our community.

One parent said what helped most was experiencing “an unbiased support system where our child felt heard and provided with services specific to his needs.”

Child Witness Program

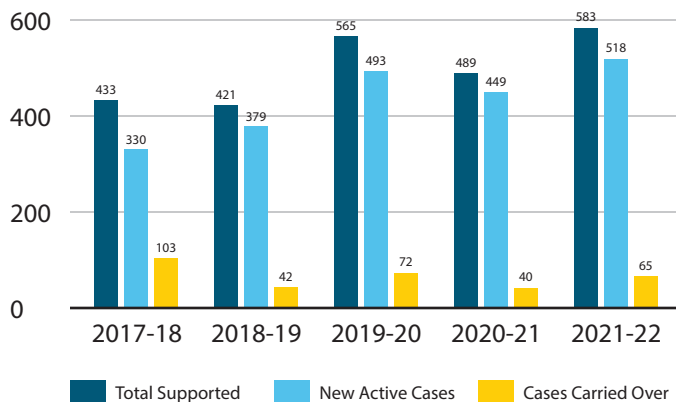
When charges are laid, children and youth who are victims or witnesses of crime, and their families, are referred to our Child Witness Program. Our caseworkers provide support at every step through the criminal court process. This includes advocacy, sharing updates, and help with preparing for trials and testifying.

One youth recently shared, “Thank you for all you do and all you did for me. This whole thing was terrifying, and I don’t think I could’ve done it without your help.”

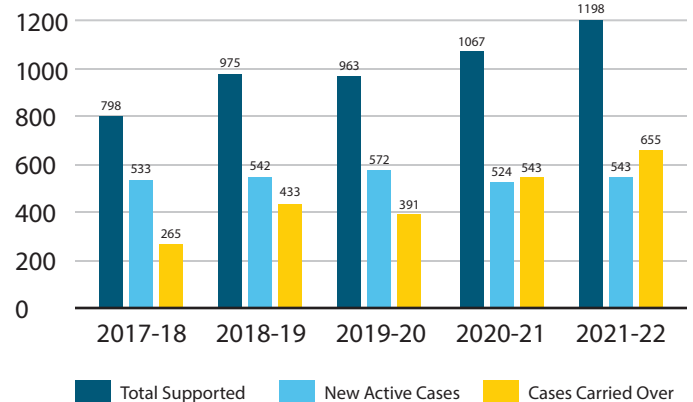
In total, **3,013** individuals were supported this past year

A Consistent Increase of Young People Receiving Support

Child & Youth Advocate Program



Child Witness Program





Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC)

This is the most ever in a single year

We are proud to be the lead of this child and youth friendly collaborative, focused on providing wrap around support under one roof during criminal investigations and beyond. Our role at the CYAC is to provide oversight and deliver services through our Child and Youth Advocate Program.



Since opening in 2016, the CYAC has supported **over 5,170** young people through investigations of abuse or crime

Our partners in the CYAC include:

Along with many more!

"Having Child Witness Centre support me was... lifesaving."

Selena is a survivor of many years of sexual abuse as a young person – from age 4 to 16. After laying charges, she went through a grueling court process as a youth. Fortunately, our agency was able to walk with her throughout this difficult journey. We deeply appreciate Selena sharing her story – and her encouraging message for young victims. We are proud of her courage and resiliency to move forward.

Selena's Story

Past Client Testimonial

Watch Selena's video on our YouTube channel



Your Generosity Makes all the Difference

Spring Appeal

Thanks to you, **over \$12,000** was raised in May 2021, to support the mental health and wellbeing of child and youth victims! A big shout-out to Septimatech and Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada Inc. for their generous corporate support. We are also grateful for our board providing a matching incentive.



You Invested in a Brighter Future for Local Young People

Holiday Campaign

Our annual “Holiday Campaign” ran from Giving Tuesday until the end of December. We were blown away by our community donating **over \$50,000** to continue our vital work with children and youth! Together, we are making a long-term positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in Waterloo Region, Guelph, and Wellington County.



Pancake Lunch 2022

It was wonderful celebrating 40 years of helping local young victims on Tuesday, March 1. We welcomed over 160 attendees to our online event, including community leaders, partner organizations, financial supporters, volunteers, board members, and staff.

Our Pancake Lunch included an exclusive interview between Chiefs of Police, Bryan Larkin and Gord Cobey, and our Executive Director, Kim Rodrigues! They discussed our mutual passion and partnership to make our community a better place for young people.



We are pleased that **over \$36,000** was raised towards helping the most vulnerable. We are grateful for the amazing support of our sponsors, donors, and ticket purchasers! We are looking forward to our 2023 Pancake Lunch – the 25th annual edition!



Watch ChefD and former Chief of Police, Bryan Larkin, on our YouTube channel

They cook up gourmet pancakes while mixing in conversation about Child Witness Centre

Spotlight on Monet

The children and youth we work with often struggle with feelings of insecurity because of the trauma they have experienced. On top of this, the court process is generally adversarial, intimidating, and overwhelming for most adults, never mind young people.

To counteract these emotions and draw out healthy ones, Monet joined our team in 2020 to offer her comforting presence and healing touch. She serves alongside our caseworkers to provide a sense of normalcy, safety, and acceptance.

Kaitlin Hudder, Caseworker, shared *"It has been observed during court preparations, evidence reviews, and sentencing that Monet's support goes well beyond helping our clients. She has a huge impact on entire families, as well as criminal justice professionals."*



Follow @nsdmonetthefacilitydog on Instagram for her updates



Another proven aid for helping survivors are transitional objects. That's why we are so excited about mini Monets (shown left), which debuted towards the end of 2021. When a young victim is transitioning from appointments or court dates to everyday life, this tangible object can help them by:

- Triggering memories of the safety and security they felt around Monet.
- Providing a sense of autonomy – when so much feels out of their control.
- Enhancing their defenses against feelings of sadness or anxiety.

We are grateful for these advances within our trauma informed practice as we work on building greater mental health and wellbeing for our clients.

Victims and Survivors of Crime Week

It was great raising special awareness for young victims, thanks to funding from The Department of Justice Canada, from November 14 to 20, 2021. The initiatives that we launched included an online article with corresponding Facebook ads, radio ads, and a social media blitz. We also distributed gift bags (shown right) as expressions of gratitude to 100 of our partners, donors, and volunteers.



In memory of Judy Frank

Judy was our office administrator from October 2017 to December 2021. She had a big heart, believed in helping the most vulnerable, and was always ready for a meaningful conversation. After suddenly becoming ill in December and being diagnosed with brain cancer, Judy put up a courageous fight. We continue to grieve Judy's loss, but celebrate the great life she lived and memories we have.

40th Flashbacks

In celebrating our 40th anniversary, we dug through our archives to reflect on the journey we travelled to arrive here. Check out our **"40th Flashbacks"** video on our YouTube channel for photos with descriptions. We are looking forward to our next 40 years!



11 First brick and mortar location (1992)

12 Chicago Tribune article (1996)

13 Duke Street East office (2013)

14 Activity books (since mid 1990s)



Receiving KW Sertoma's 2021 Service to Mankind Award

Did you know **Laura Cook, Caseworker,** has served with our agency since the year 2000?



Demonstrating our "Court in a Drawer" in 2009



17 Child & Youth Advocacy Centre (2017)

18 Pancake Lunch (since 1999)

19 "The Reynolds Loft" (2013)

20 Farwell4Hire campaign (2020)

Highlights from Our 40 Years

1981

Reports of two child sexual assault cases stimulated the formation of **Citizens Concerned with Crime Against Children (4Cs)**, led by Judy Harding. The primary focus was addressing the lack of community services and prevention programs as well as the insensitivity of the court to victims.

1982

4Cs embarked on **a public education program**, which included a colouring book entitled "Talking and Drawing About It" for use by parents along with a video and guide for use by teachers.

1983

4Cs was **incorporated** and became a **registered charity**. What had started as a small group of volunteers had quickly become a more formal organization.

1989

Progress was made **during the 1980s** in the treatment of children and youth as victims, including; 1) child witnesses being allowed to testify outside the courtroom or behind screens; 2) the use of videotaped evidence of children were permitted; 3) court was required to consider a victim impact statement at the time of sentencing an offender, and; 4) victim surcharges, used for victim assistance, became part of Canada's sentencing law.

1991

4Cs started **Child Witness Program** to help children and youth who were victims of sexual assault to prepare for court.

1992

The **'4Cs House' was established** at 100 Lancaster Street East, Kitchener, across from the courthouse, with support from the Sertoma Foundation. Waterloo Regional Police had 24-hour access to the agency's building, and its video facility, to ensure a child friendly interview environment.

1994

Cambridge facility opened at 120 Main Street Cambridge, provided by the West Cambridge Optimist Club, to facilitate support for Cambridge residents.

1999

Child Witness Program **was expanded to include all crimes** against children and youth under the age of 18 in Waterloo Region. FACS integrated their child witness services into the 4Cs program.

2002

4Cs renamed to **Child Witness Centre of Waterloo Region**, to better reflect our work. There has been a significant increase in young people served each year since the expansion.

2006

Services are expanded to **Guelph and Wellington County**, with financial assistance from the Ministry of Attorney General.

2013

Agency moves to its current location at 111 Duke Street East, Kitchener, with the significant financial support of the Rotary Club of Kitchener-Conestoga. New logo is launched the same year.

2016

Together with our core partners, Waterloo Regional Police and Family and Children's Services, we opened the **Waterloo Region Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC)**. This came after our agency led a needs assessment and feasibility study.

2019

Child Witness Centre **exceeds Safe Hands-Strong Futures campaign goal of \$2 million**, and child abuse investigations through the CYAC surpass 1,500 since opening.

2020

An **Accredited Facility Dog, Monet**, joins the team and is the first dog working in criminal court in Waterloo Region. Her role is providing mental health support to young victims in the court process.

2021

CWC celebrates 40 years supporting the most vulnerable, **thanks to the community!** Over 1,500 children and youth were supported through our programs in our 2020-21 fiscal year.

The Heart of Community at Work

It is our community's generosity that has enabled our work to continue for four decades. Here are some examples of amazing support we received this past fiscal year. We can not tell you how much we appreciate your care and compassion for the most vulnerable.



We are grateful for the generous donation of \$10,937 from **100 Men Who Give a Damn Waterloo Region**. This came after being selected as their quarterly charity recipient when we presented at their virtual meeting on July 14, 2021.



We were overjoyed at the support of **TW Properties' 2021 "Food Drive for Dollars"**. TW Properties and The Gordon & Ruth Gooder Charitable Foundation each presented us a cheque for \$5,502, matching the pounds of items donated to Cambridge Food Bank.



We are thankful for the wonderful support of **Staples (at The Boardwalk), in partnership with Kiwanis Club of Cameron Heights**, who donated \$1,225 in November. These funds were raised by collecting donations at their store's cash registers.



"It gives you a good feeling that you're giving to the community... I don't know how else to describe it."
The desire to help sexually abused children prompted **KW Sertoma Club** to begin supporting our work 30 years ago. Their generosity continues to this day.

Watch Phyllis' video on our YouTube channel
"Helping Abused Children"

2021-22 Financial Summary

Treasurer's Report

Child Witness Centre (CWC) ended our 2021-22 fiscal year in a good financial position. The COVID-19 operating environment continued to create many challenges, but our team pressed on and handled it very well.

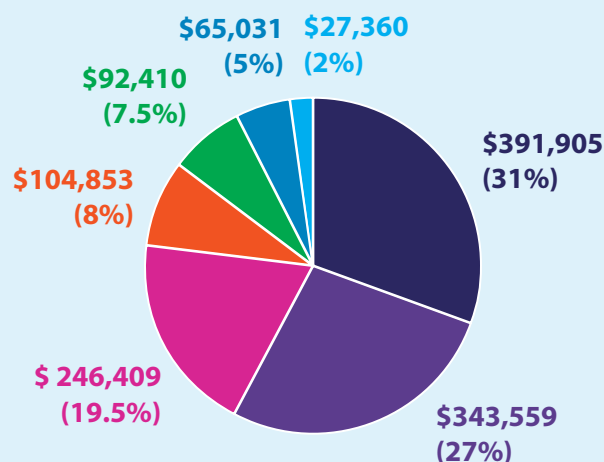
CWC received significant COVID-19 subsidies and funding from the federal government to help “keep the doors open and lights on.” As in previous years, funding from government bodies and United Way continued to flow, with additional funds received to meet increased costs related to the pandemic. We are also deeply grateful for funding provided by The Department of Justice Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Attorney General.

Our donors, supporters, and funders are essential to the sustainability of our organization. As throughout our 40-year history, we are reliant on the generous support of our community to carry on our work. We are committed to remaining wise and responsible stewards of the monies you entrust to us.

Dianne Romano
Board Treasurer

This annual report shares some highlights and summary information from the audited financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2022. Complete financial statements are available upon request.

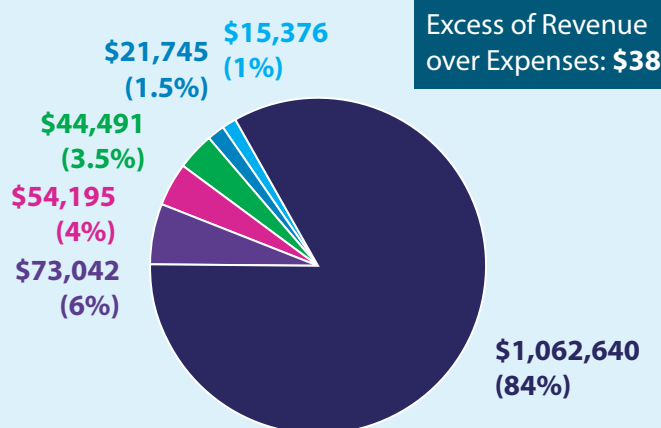
Revenue



Total Revenue: \$1,271,527

- Community Donations
- Government
- COVID-19 Federal Subsidies
- COVID-19 Government Funding
- United Way
- Fundraising Events
- Other

Expenses



Excess of Revenue over Expenses: \$38

Total Expenses: \$1,271,489

- Staffing
- Facility Expenses
- Amortization
- Administrative Expenses
- Resource Development and Marketing
- Direct Program Expenses



Certain funding is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Attorney General. Views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.



Thank You
for 40 Years of
Helping Local Young
Victims Together

Charitable registration # 10097 7180 RR0001

111 Duke Street East, Kitchener, ON N2H 1A4
Tel: 519-744-0904 | Toll-free: 1-888-544-0904
Fax: 519-744-5379 | admin@childwitness.com

childwitness.com     

Child 
Witness
Centre