



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

A year of resilience, growth, and hope for all



SAFSS
Settlement Assistance &
Family Support Services

Table of Contents

Land Acknowledgement	03
Anti-Black Racism Statement	04
Vision, Mission and Values	05
Board Chair's Address	06
Executive Director's Address	07
Strategic Direction	08
Programs	09
Board of Directors	19
Our Funders	20
Our Partners	21
Our Locations	22
Contact Us	23

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which we at SAFSS carry out our work. It is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

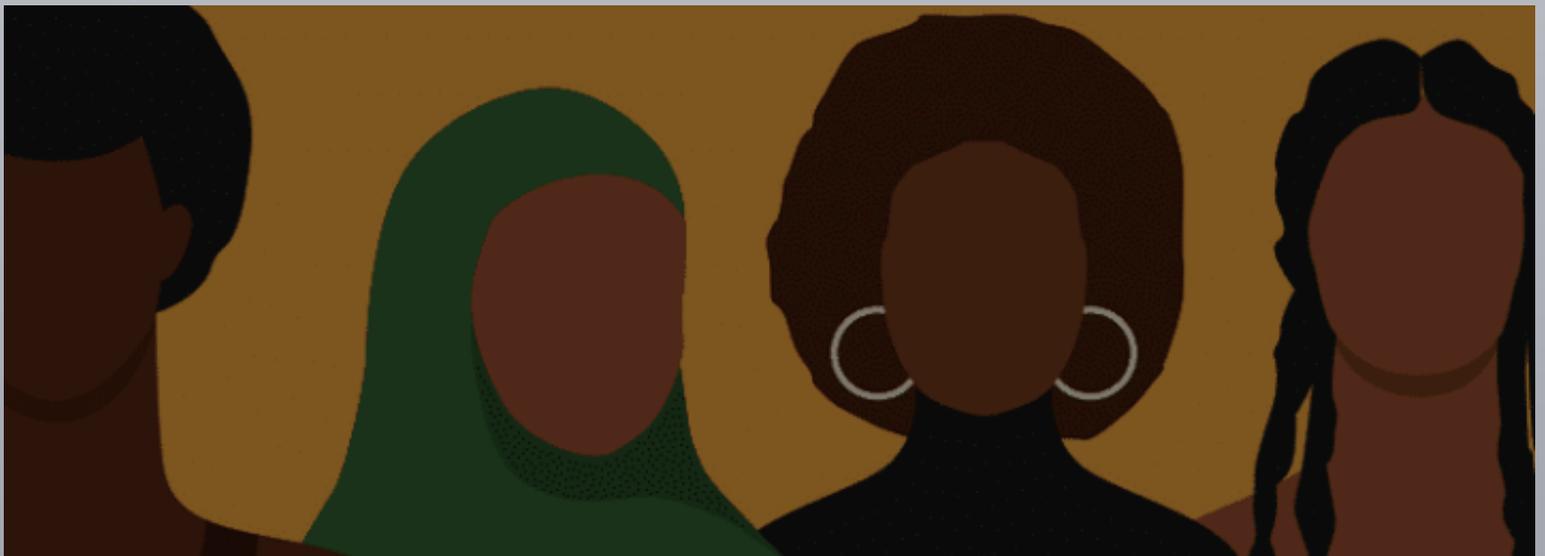
We also acknowledge that, for those who are settlers, we have benefited from this land and Canada's colonial history. We commit to our end of the treaties by respecting the land, centering Indigenous self-determination, and working with Indigenous communities to repair harm that has been done when settlers have not upheld their treaty agreements.



Anti-Black Racism Statement

We acknowledge that the history of African Canadians is rich, spans over 400 years and continues to be made every day by African Canadians. We understand that anti-Black racism has historically and continues to be intertwined with the lived experiences of people of African descent in Canada.

We recognize that anti-Black racism is deeply embedded in Canadian institutions, practices and policies, including child welfare. However, we vow to disrupt and dismantle the oppressive and systemic anti-Black racism that continues to disproportionately affect African Canadians.



Mission, Vision & Values

MISSION

To empower and assist all community members, in strengthening their lives, building their future, and enhancing their dreams.

VISION

A community that is equitable, inclusive, accessible, and welcoming of all.

VALUES

Advocacy

We work hard to support and assist newcomers, refugees, those in poverty and isolation, and victims of any type of violence.

Integrity

We are open, honest, transparent and accountable.

Trust

We strive to create a professional, safe and non-judgmental environment and we take confidentiality very seriously.

Respect

We value diversity and inclusion and work hard to develop a positive work culture.

Chair's Address



2024 was not just an ordinary "leap" year. In SAFSS terms, it marked another successful year for an agency that has been around for 35 years.

Since the inception of this great agency in 1989, we have trodden the road of uncertainty, funding cuts, spending restraints and other administrative challenges. However, one thing remained constant: our commitment to the people of East Toronto that we served. The agency started out as a hub to serve women experiencing violence, but has morphed into a non-profit providing language classes, support for children, among many others. During the past year, we managed to serve over 3000 clients from over 20 countries speaking a variety of languages. We have heard countless positive stories, helped hundreds of women and have aided many newcomers in learning English. Like the previous year, 2024 was uniquely successful. The agency was able to create an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool with trauma-informed practices for the language program so that instructors could utilize this tool to look for positive results based on real-life scenarios. This AI tool also helps with generating lesson plans specifically targeting the range of issues that our clients continue to experience. It is a distinct tool in that it is specially designed to assist newcomers, given the challenges, discrimination and other biases they experience integrating into Canada.

With the help and support of our landlord, staff and board, we were able to start a food distribution center for non-perishable items. This is what we call service diversification to fill a need in our service epicenter. Most importantly, this distribution center has been able to cater to the cultural needs of our client base.

Over the last year, the agency's staff spent a significant amount of time writing proposals so that we could secure funding for the upcoming 3-year federal funding cycle. Because of this, we have been able to secure funding for two (2) new programs, receiving a slight increase in funding, all while our core programs remained steady and fairly evenly funded.

This is not by any means a singular effort. I pause to thank the Board of Directors for their commitment, hard work, dedication, personal efforts, time and enthusiasm in supporting this wonderful agency. Your expertise and loyalty are greatly appreciated.

I also want to take an opportunity to publicly thank SAFSS Executive Director and all staff who contribute daily to the positive outcomes of the agency. Some of you have been with SAFSS for decades, and this work has become a core part of your personal self - for that, I say thank you. Your commitment to work for the non-profit sector (and a charity) does not go unnoticed, so again, we thank you for continuing this important work.

I also want to express gratitude to our funders who continue to show support for the work of this agency and support the residents of Toronto East who depend on the service offerings of SAFSS. Your continued funding is a testament to your commitment to ending violence, removing barriers, and providing support to integrate newcomers into Canadian society.

In closing, I want to thank this agency for giving me six wonderful years to serve on the Board. It was truly a blessing and an honour to serve. Humbly!

Executive Director's Address



In a year marked by unprecedented challenges, including funding reductions from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and a broader decrease in financial support, our organization's commitment to our mission has been tested like never before. These external pressures could have derailed our work, but instead, they served as a powerful reminder of our core purpose. The spirit of SAFSS has proven unbreakable, and we refused to let these adversities compromise the quality of service we provide to our community. We have navigated this difficult landscape with an unwavering resolve to continue our essential work, finding innovative ways to operate efficiently and effectively while maintaining the high standards you have come to expect from us.

Our resilience is a direct reflection of the unwavering dedication of our staff, the tireless efforts of our volunteers, and the steadfast support of our partners. It is because of this collective strength that we were able to not only sustain our critical services but also innovate new ways to support our clients. As we look ahead, we remain focused on our purpose, confident that our collective resolve will see us through any future challenge. Thank you for being an essential part of the SAFSS family and for your trust as we continue to build a stronger, more resilient organisation for the years to come.

Strategic Direction

Increase Capacity

Ensure growth
matches capacity
to maintain
excellence

Logic Model Approach

Use frameworks
to measure
outcomes and
support KPIs

Robust Needs- Assessment

Evaluate individual
and community
needs

Holistic Approach

Strengthen
programs by
addressing all
challenges

Impact Driven

Adopt an outcomes-
based approach
to define success

Targeted Program Funding

Use needs data
to secure funding
opportunities

Women's Program

Since 1990, SAFSS has been dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence and their families. We offer a comprehensive range of services tailored to meet individual needs, with a primary goal of holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

The program provides counselling, legal and housing assistance, and other assistance as required by the abused women and children, and coordinates with the police, court, and other service providers for the victim's case management.

The program also intervenes with the crisis and refers the cases to appropriate authorities and service providers to fulfill the needs of the victims, and deals with trauma, stress, and depression to help the victims lead an independent, positive life.

SAFSS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (2024-2025)

PROGRAM / SERVICE	IMPACT / OUTCOME
 VAW Counselling Services (MCCSS)	183 women received vital counseling
 Transitional Housing Support Program (MCCSS)	330 women assisted in securing safe housing
 VAW Support Groups (CSP)	583 women engaged in group healing sessions
 Volunteer Hours for VAW Grupos Groups	720 volunteer hours contributed
 Afghan Seniors Support Groups (CSP)	1,597 isolated seniors participated
 Volunteer Hours at Afghan Seniors	1,440 hours donated by community volunteers
 English Conversation Classes (City of Toronto)	60 volunteers provided groceries and friendly visits
 Dolphin Bingo Hall Volunteers	60 volunteers supported events
 Men Make a Difference Program	Behavior-focused counselling for healthy relationships

Women's Program



Client Story

I am Beautiful! A Survivor's Journey to Freedom.

I was 20 when my marriage was arranged by my parents. I became pregnant at the age of 21. The verbal abuse started when I was 3 months pregnant. My husband began to body shame me. He would tell me I was "fat" and that I was "ugly". He began to constantly tell me that I was "good for nothing." Hearing this week after week, I eventually began to believe it, and so began the "training" to try to make myself better for my partner.

He would apologize and tell me that he loved me and that it would not happen again. I experienced the first of many physical beatings of my life when my baby was 6 months old. I was left with two black eyes, a busted lip and marks on my back from being whipped with a belt. I was scared, disoriented and in shock.

But still, I cared more about him and the consequences he would face, so I didn't report it. He begged me for forgiveness, cried and promised it would never happen again. I wasn't on speaking terms with my family because they believed him and not me, so I was completely alone and embarrassed by what had happened. Somehow, he and my family made me believe it was my fault. For years, I believed I deserved it.

I attempted to leave after my daughter was one year old. The first time I left him and went to my parents' home. Each time he would show up at my parents' home begging for forgiveness, crying, bringing flowers and anything to show proof of change. When you love someone, you want to believe them and give them the benefit of the doubt. Every time I returned, it was not long before the abusive behaviour would begin all over again.

He did not allow me to have any friends, and I was often kept isolated. Whenever he left the house, he would take the car keys and our only phone with him so that I would not have any contact with the outside world.

It was clear to everyone around me that I was being manipulated and controlled. The problem was that I did not have a mind of my own at that point, with the ability to see it for myself, as this was all I knew!

I was able to finally escape the cycle of abuse I was stuck in, and with the help of SAFSS Counsellors, I moved into a women's shelter with my child.

Thanks to the support provided by SAFSS, I successfully transitioned from shelter living to stable, subsidized housing. Was it easy? No, it was not! I still have to endure the sad reality of healing for myself and my traumatized child, but that is another story to be told. I have since enrolled in the Personal Support Worker (PSW) program, taking meaningful steps toward long-term independence and career development. Furthermore, I now volunteer with SAFSS—an act of giving back that not only strengthens my connection to the community but also boosts my morale, self-confidence and sense of purpose.

My message to my sisters who are in a similar situation – you don't have to be a victim; you can instead be a thriving survivor of domestic violence.

As counsellors, we have been able to instill the self-confidence she built with our help. Flash forward to more recent times, she is now able to look at herself in the mirror and say to her reflection that she is beautiful and deserves to be happy and pursue her dreams.

Settlement Program



Settlement

Settlement services include assessment, orientation, referral, information, completing government documents, advocacy, and counselling for new immigrants and settled immigrants.



Information & Orientation

The Information and Orientation (I&O) program addresses the settlement needs of Permanent Residents and Convention refugees. This program offers settlement and integration services to newcomers by providing essential information, referrals, and guidance, thereby enabling them to gain a comprehensive understanding of life in Canada. The program empowers individuals to make informed decisions regarding their settlement needs. I&O ensures that newcomers receive timely, useful, and accurate information, enabling them to navigate Canadian systems, including laws, rights, responsibilities, and access to community resources.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

INFORMATION & ORIENTATION



2300 unique clients



813 returning clients



1487 new clients



35 group sessions

NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT PROGRAM (NSP)



570 unique clients



700 one-on-one services delivered



8 workshops

Settlement Program

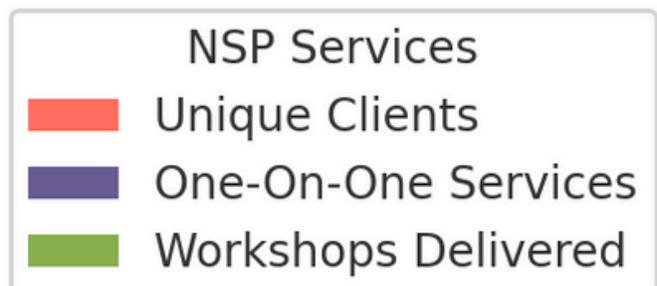
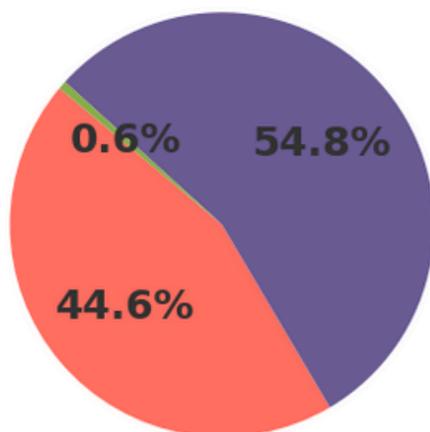
Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP)

NSP provides services to permanent residents, Canadian citizens, convention refugees, refugee claimants, live-in caregivers, visitors, work permits, and Minister’s permit holders who have special permission to remain in Canada.

- A total of 570 unique clients received settlement services through the NSP program.
- 700 One-On-One services were delivered via in-person or remote interaction to assess needs, provide information, and make referrals.

Additionally, 8 workshops were delivered under the NSP Program on various topics to provide the needed information to empower our clients.

NSP Services Distribution



Client Story

My name is Zahra Yazdani Poorfard, and my husband, Ahmad Gholamrezaey, immigrated to Canada as an investor on July 22, 2016. We settled in Montreal, Quebec, and applied for Canadian citizenship on August 20, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We were following up on our application regularly, and everything appeared to be progressing normally. A few months later, we were invited for an interview, which gave us hope that the oath ceremony would follow soon. According to the IRCC tracking system, all steps had been completed. However, months went by, and we heard nothing from IRCC.

We contacted the agency that had helped us with the application. The settlement worker checked the system and assured us that everything appeared to be in order, and we would hear from IRCC soon. But more time passed, and there was still no news.

Concerned, our daughter called IRCC. After waiting on hold for a long time, the representative told her that our file was progressing and we would hear back soon. Another year passed. We visited the office of our local MP, who kindly wrote a letter to IRCC on our behalf. After a few months, the response was again the same: "Everything is fine. Please wait."

We were deeply disappointed. Four years had passed with no resolution. We consulted a lawyer who charged us \$300 but did nothing to move our case forward. It felt like all our efforts were for nothing.

Eventually, we received the contact information for Macy through a family friend in Toronto who had been very satisfied with her support. We called Macy and shared our long and frustrating journey with her. She listened carefully and compassionately. She checked our IRCC account and asked us several detailed questions. Then she called IRCC directly to follow up with a representative.

It took several tries and long hours of waiting on hold. Sometimes the representative couldn't speak with her, but Macy didn't give up. On the third attempt, she managed to speak with an IRCC representative. With my permission, Macy communicated on my behalf and interpreted everything for me. She was patient, professional, and spoke with genuine enthusiasm, as if it were her own case. She asked all the right questions and explained everything clearly.

The IRCC representative confirmed that our file was complete and nothing was wrong—we simply had to wait.

To our great surprise, just one week later, we received an email from IRCC inviting us to attend the citizenship ceremony!

The first thing we did was call Macy to thank her. Both my husband and I are deeply grateful for her dedication. She spent nearly three hours helping us. Her patience, commitment, and determination brought our forgotten file back to IRCC's attention. Macy's skills and passion truly made a difference.

Thank you, Macy, from the bottom of our hearts.

Language Training & Skills Development Program

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is offered at SAFSS, from three strategically located centers which are in high need areas east of Scarborough. The three locations, Morningside Centre, Finch Centre and Kingston Centre, offered literacy to level 6 in-person language instruction to newcomers who are either Permanent Residents or Convention Refugees. 784 students attended the Language Instruction for Newcomers Training (LINC) program.



Citizenship preparation classes were offered online for three evenings. 62 students attended the Citizenship class, and of them, 19 students completed the program and successfully received their Citizenship Certificates.

The Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program offered childcare services to infants, toddlers and preschool children. 136 children attended the program whose parents were enrolled in the language classes. The CNC service made the language learners' acquisition of English possible as they were able to leave their children in the same premises under the supervision of professional childcare staff members.

Summer programs were offered for language classes and a summer camp for school-age children. Parents who had school-age children had the provision for bringing their school-age children to the centres in summer (July and August during school closure); while the parents were able to focus on improving their language skills. During the summer program, 38 school-age children attended the summer program.

The majority of the clients (80%) used public transportation and availed transportation assistance offered by the program.

In the fiscal year 2024-2025, 784 clients were served.

The top five countries and languages served were:

- Sri Lanka (Tamil)
- Afghanistan (Dari, Farsi & Pushto)
- Syria
- Uganda
- China (Mandarin and Cantonese)

Language Training and Skills Development



LINC Program 784 students
(3 Centres) attended literacy
to level 6 classes



Citizenship 62 attended |
Classes 19 earned Citizenship
Certificates



Care for Newcomer Children (CNC)
136 children received childcare
while parents studied



Summer Program 38 school-going
children attended
summer camp



Transportation 80 % of learners
Assistance used support
to access classes



Top 5 Countries & Languages Served
Sri Lanka (Tamil), Syria (Arabic),
Afghanistan (Dari, Farsi & Pushto), Uganda
(Swahili), China (Mandarin & Cantonese)

Language Training & Skills Development Program



Information sessions:

Students attended information sessions on the following topics:

- Police and Safety
- Landlord and Tenant's Rights
- Mental Health
- Ontario Works.
- Legal Aid
- Health System in Ontario
- Healthy Eating and Lifestyle
- Cold, Flu and Personal Hygiene
- Canada Pensions
- Dental Health and Hygiene
- Children's Aid Society (CAS)



Field Trips:

- Queens Park
- City Hall
- Scarborough Historical Museum
- Fort York
- Maple Sugar Bush



Highlights:

- **Walkathon:** Students from all three centers actively participated in SAFSS's walkathon event, where participants congregated at Morningside Centre in the late summer. They walked together to the Malvern Assembly Church and back.
- **Earth Day:** was celebrated by integrating environmental awareness into language learning. Through targeted vocabulary instruction (e.g., "reduce, reuse, recycle"), reading activities, and group discussions, learners practiced their English skills while engaging with themes of sustainability and community responsibility. Students also compared Canadian environmental practices with those from their home countries, fostering intercultural exchange. Activities such as poster-making and collaborative discussions encouraged participation, critical thinking, and teamwork. The students were actively involved in going around the neighbourhood with garbage bags to keep their surroundings clean, safe, and healthy.
- **Terry Fox Day:** The LINC Centre organized a Terry Fox Walk to honour Terry Fox's legacy and raise awareness about cancer research. Students, staff, and community members joined together to walk in solidarity, reflecting on Terry's determination, courage, and hope. The event not only promoted health and wellness but also provided newcomers with an opportunity to learn about an important Canadian hero and tradition. It was a meaningful day that combined physical activity, community spirit, and cultural learning.

Client Story

My name is Samira Mahamadou Nouri. I have been in Canada for 8 months. Before attending the LINC program, I faced a lot of challenges, such as not knowing how to ask for information and having the fear of going out alone because I had limited English language skills. Lack of reliable information made me feel uncertain about my future. I realized that learning English is crucial. In this new environment, socializing and gaining knowledge about Canada are very important for me to navigate this new country, where I have come to settle.

My husband recommended that I go for a language assessment to join the English class. A few days later, I joined the LINC program at SAFSS, Finch Centre.

Fortunately, as soon as I joined the LINC program, my ways of seeing things changed. Meeting other students who had the same language challenges in my class made me feel at ease and less nervous. Attending this program five days a week has also helped me socialize with students from different countries, making it feel like a big family. I have learned a lot about Canada's history, geography, government and other useful information on how to live in this country. My confidence level and understanding of the Canadian system have greatly improved.

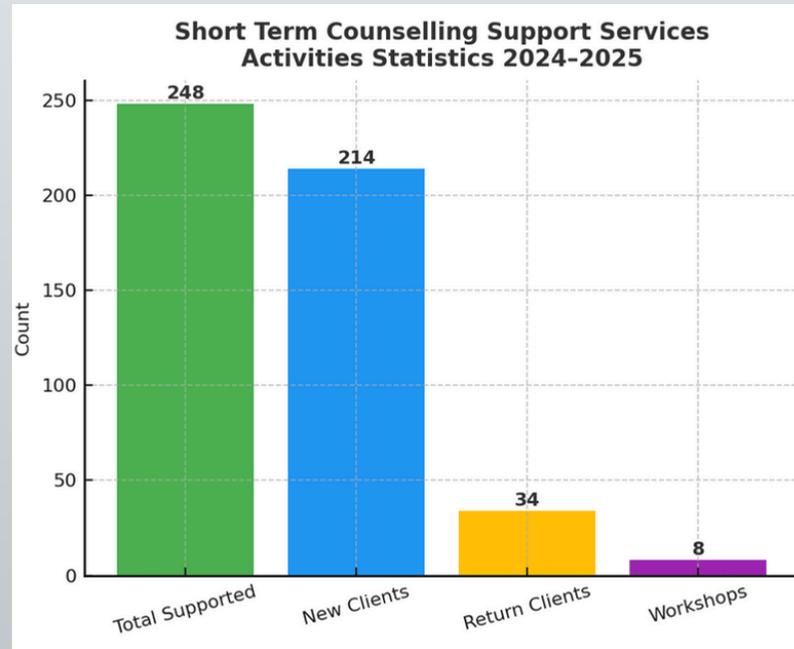
Regarding the outcome, I can just say it's been unbelievable. Firstly, I feel I have improved both the productive skills (speaking and writing) and the two receptive skills (listening and reading) week after week. Secondly, I have had the opportunity to attend information sessions presented by professional presenters on various topics, which have given me a better understanding of the Canadian system. Thirdly, this program has helped me to know how to get my credentials evaluated from WES. Finally, I learned the right way to apply to a college program. I feel confident that I can continue my post-secondary education soon, as I have developed both my language and academic skills. At present, I am preparing to apply to a community college. I feel very confident talking to people in the mall, in the grocery store, explaining my problems to the doctor without someone else speaking on my behalf, and travelling by bus. I thank the staff and the government for the free language class, which was a lifeline for me, and I feel so much happier and better equipped to settle and meet the challenges of settling in a new country. Thank you, SAFSS!!



Mental Health & Well-Being Program

Short-Term Counselling Support Services has made meaningful progress in providing timely, personalized mental health support to our clients. Despite limited staffing, we maintained smooth service delivery by training interns, dedicated volunteers, and collaborating closely with community partners. Our in-person and online counselling services improved client access to vital support during challenging times. Outreach activities—including engaging workshops and a vibrant three-day Mental Health Week—helped us connect with more people, especially SAFSS-LINC students. Client feedback consistently highlights how the care and understanding they received made a real difference in managing both emotional struggles and settlement challenges.

One inspiring example is an immigrant with a history of emotional and relationship issues who initially struggled in isolation, lacking confidence, motivation, and hope. Though employed part-time and financially stable, she found it difficult to invest in herself or envision a positive future. Through short-term counselling, she received calm, nonjudgmental support that validated her experiences and respected her autonomy. With counselling, she gradually gained insight, rebuilt her self-worth, and began to see new possibilities for her life. Among the many positive changes, she chose to take driving lessons—something she had long postponed. Learning to drive became a powerful symbol of her growing confidence, independence, and renewed hope.



New vs Return Clients (April 2024 - March 2025)



Looking ahead, we plan to expand our referral network, improve service delivery, and pursue Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) registration. While funding challenges persist, ongoing advocacy and professional development enable us to continue supporting newcomer and immigrant mental health effectively.

Board of Directors



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José Rosales

— Our Funders

Thank You

Together with the support of our funders, we continue to build stronger, more inclusive, and empowered communities.

- **Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)**
- **Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)**
- **City of Toronto**
- **Ontario's Lottery & Gaming (OLG)**
- **Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism (MCM-ARAH)**
- **Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD)**
- **Community Service Partnership (CSP)**



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Our Partners

- Scarborough Furniture Bank
- Toronto Furniture Bank
- Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- The Storefront
- Brands for Canada
- Council of Agencies Serving South Asians
- MCIS Language Solutions
- Aaniin Community Center
- Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- Toronto Police Service Scarborough
- COSTI
- Toronto Public Health
- YMCA- Assessment Centre
- Iranian Women's Organization of Ontario (IWO)
- York Furniture Bank JRCC
- Charity Bed Program
- New Circle Clothing
- Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities (SCHC)
- Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)
- South Asian Health Alliance (SAHA)
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
- Heritage Skills Development Center (HSDC)
- Mothers Matter Canada
- The Children's Book Bank (CBB)



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