

2024–2025 ANNUAL REPORT

john
howard
society

Peel-Halton
-Dufferin

Stories behind statistics; causes behind crime.

“We have to help the community understand why our work is important. And the only way to do that effectively is to help people recognize that the people who use our services are, in fact, people.”

— Kara Hart, CEO

johnhoward.on.ca



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that our offices are on Indigenous land, and we honour the Indigenous people who continue to protect and care for the place we call home. We are acknowledging the land in the three regions of Halton, Peel, and Dufferin. We recognize the land in Halton as the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishnabek, Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Ojibway/Chippewa peoples, and home to the Métis. We recognize the land on which the Region of Peel operates is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation in addition to the groups noted for Halton. We are also acknowledging that Dufferin County resides within the traditional territory and ancestral lands of the Tionontati (Petun), Attawandaron (Neutral), Haudenosaunee (Six Nations), and Anishinaabe peoples.

We recognize that the lands we now know as the Regions of Halton, Peel, and Dufferin County were stolen and colonized by our western European ancestors and that we have failed to care for the land that Canada's Indigenous peoples shared in good faith. We acknowledge that the treaties were not implemented with integrity and honesty and that this resulted in ethnic cleansing and forced removal of Indigenous people from traditional territories. These treaties include: Treaty 1 — The Head of the Lake Purchase, signed on September 12th, 1806, including the land along the north shore of Lake Ontario through to the southwest of the Toronto Purchase; Treaty 19 — The Ajetance Purchase, signed on October 28th, 1818, covering 6,500 km², including the land encompassed by Brampton in the south, Orangeville in the north, Bolton in the east, and Guelph/Fergus in the west; the Brant Tract or Treaty 3 $\frac{3}{4}$, signed on October 24th, 1795, covering 3,500 acres, encompassing Burlington and portions of west Oakville; and finally Treaty 3 to the Between the Lakes Purchase, signed on December 2nd, 1792, covering 3 million acres, including West Burlington, north to Guelph, east to Hamilton, and south to Lake Erie. We also acknowledge that various municipalities within the County of Dufferin reside within the treaty lands named under the Haldimand Deed of 1784 and two of the Williams Treaties of 1818: Treaty 18 — the Nottawasaga Purchase, and Treaty 1 — The Ajetance Purchase.

Indigenous people from many nations continue to live and thrive in the Halton, Peel, and Dufferin Region, maintaining stewardship of traditional lands and we appreciate their historic connection to these places. As settlers, we take up the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation in our communities and to bring justice for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, survivors and families of children forced to attend residential schools and of the '60s scoop. We know that this acknowledgement alone is not sufficient action and that we must take tangible steps to improve the lives of our Indigenous community members.

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer



This year has been about grounding ourselves in our mission. We've focused on the fundamentals, ensuring we have the frameworks, policies, and procedures to do our job really well. Just as so often stability is a goal for our clients, it's an important one for the agency too. In the face of continuing social, economic, and political uncertainty, it ensures we can deliver the support our clients need.

Any enduring organization also needs to move with the times if it is to have ongoing impact. This year, a big success has been working closely with our funders to ensure that the actual cost of delivering programs is covered by their budgets. This has made a big difference in our ability to meet targets and client goals.

In addition, we've set up programs to assist clients with basic necessities, like food, travel, and tenant insurance, where there aren't other resources available. Not only has this approach been the foundation for better client engagement and results, but it's given our teams the tools to break down barriers to success — boosting their well-being in the process.

Driving stability alongside positive change for our clients is something we've always done, and we were proud to celebrate our 45th anniversary this year. Reaching this milestone reaffirmed that we're on the right track and doing the work that's needed. While the social and economic factors influencing communities may be different today, our services remain necessary because the root causes of crime still exist.

So, it seemed apt for this report to focus on uncovering the stories behind the statistics, and highlighting the root causes of crime. It is only in engaging with these that we'll see the shifts we need, both in social service provision and attitudes. Every client of JHS PHD is a real person with a life and history. And it's important to remember that many of us are a missed paycheck, life change, or severe illness away from facing some of the same struggles. It's not about denying accountability — it's about showing humanity and believing in a better future.

I encourage you to read on and learn about the immense impact of our work, through the eyes of our staff. They are the heart of all we do. I

thank each of them for showing up every day with passion and compassion. Likewise, to our volunteers, who give one of life's most precious commodities, thank you for choosing our mission. The Board has been integral to stabilizing the organization and addressing some significant challenges this year — thank you for your support and encouragement. And finally, to our donors and funders, I want to say

how grateful I am for giving us the capacity to do the work we're doing. You're right alongside us: from clients in crisis, to staff training, the money you donate goes so far.

As I look ahead, my focus is on strengthening our programs and continuing to create a workplace that fosters staff well-being, so that our teams can continue their great work in our community over the next year.

Kara Hart

Kara Hart

CEO, John Howard Society, Peel-Halton-Dufferin

"Every client of JHS PHD is a real person with a life and history. And it's important to remember that many of us are a missed paycheck, life change, or severe illness away from facing some of the same struggles. It's not about denying accountability — it's about showing humanity and believing in a better future."



"The program allows participants to change their behaviour and make positive adjustments before potentially jeopardizing their future. It truly serves as a meaningful and constructive way to support personal growth and rehabilitation. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity."

— Direct
Accountability
Program client

Breaking down the root causes of crime

Last year, there were **7,455** releases from provincial correctional facilities recorded as having no fixed address.

— John Howard Society, 2025

Indigenous adults accounted for **30%** of admissions to provincial/territorial custody and **29%** of admissions to federal custody, while representing approximately **4%** of the Canadian adult population.

— Government of Canada, 2018

Black adults accounted for **14%** of admission to custody and **8%** of admissions to community services in Ontario, while representing about **5%** of the adult population in that province.

— Government of Canada, 2021

- Canadian prison population total **1980: 23,560** (96 people per **100,000** population)
- Canadian prison population total **2019: 38,570** (104 people per **100,000** population)

— World Prison Brief, 2021

- **72%** of federally sentenced individuals have some need for education or employment.
- **54%** of the incarcerated population have less than a Grade 10 education.
- **62%** of federally sentenced men were unemployed at the time of their arrest.

— John Howard Society, 2018

- **70%** of offenders in prison had unstable job histories.
- **73%** of homeless people had been arrested at least once.
- **49%** of homeless people had been incarcerated once.

— The Toronto Star, 2011

Understanding the root causes of crime and shifting the narrative

In the 45 years since we opened our doors, the biggest misconception about crime remains the same: it is that people decide to engage in criminal activity. That it's a conscious choice — that it's their morality and personal values that lead them to commit a crime.

In fact, there are missing pieces that have contributed to where they are today and there are root causes driving justice system involvement.

While no factor guarantees that someone will commit a crime, we assess certain vulnerabilities in our clients because they do increase risk.

Social environment is crucial, and economic factors place stress on communities and families. For example, in the 1990s, high unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity were significant contributing factors, while latchkey kids had more freedom to engage in unsupervised activities. Today, poverty and housing affordability are huge problems, and we've seen a breakdown in community structures as resources and social services are increasingly stretched.

"It's growing up with conflicts, neglect, and abuse. In the case of vulnerable youth, it's seeking connection and a sense of belonging," explains our CEO

Kara Hart. "There's also societal structure; we live in a meritocracy where the expectation is that the harder you work, the more successful you'll be and yet, for the vast majority of people, that doesn't play out."

Connected to poverty are mental health and substance use. One of our earliest programs was the relapse prevention program for substance use, particularly focusing on individuals coming out of custody. Today, these services are as vital as ever but wait lists are long and help could always go further, meaning it's difficult to care for yourself, hold down a job, and avoid conflict with the law.

Systemic racism also continues to play a large role. More Black and Indigenous people are charged and arrested, and sentencing is more severe, compared to the general population.

How we're shifting the narrative

We consider the root causes of crime in all we do, meaning our focus becomes more about the individual story and how we can address contributing factors in order to prevent crime.

"The root causes of crime were the same then as they are now. One of the first objects of our bylaws was to focus on youth. The longer one is within the criminal justice system (as an alternative 'life' style), the harder it becomes to come back. Like a repeat offender once said, 'how can I be re-rehabilitated, if I wasn't habilitated in the first place'."

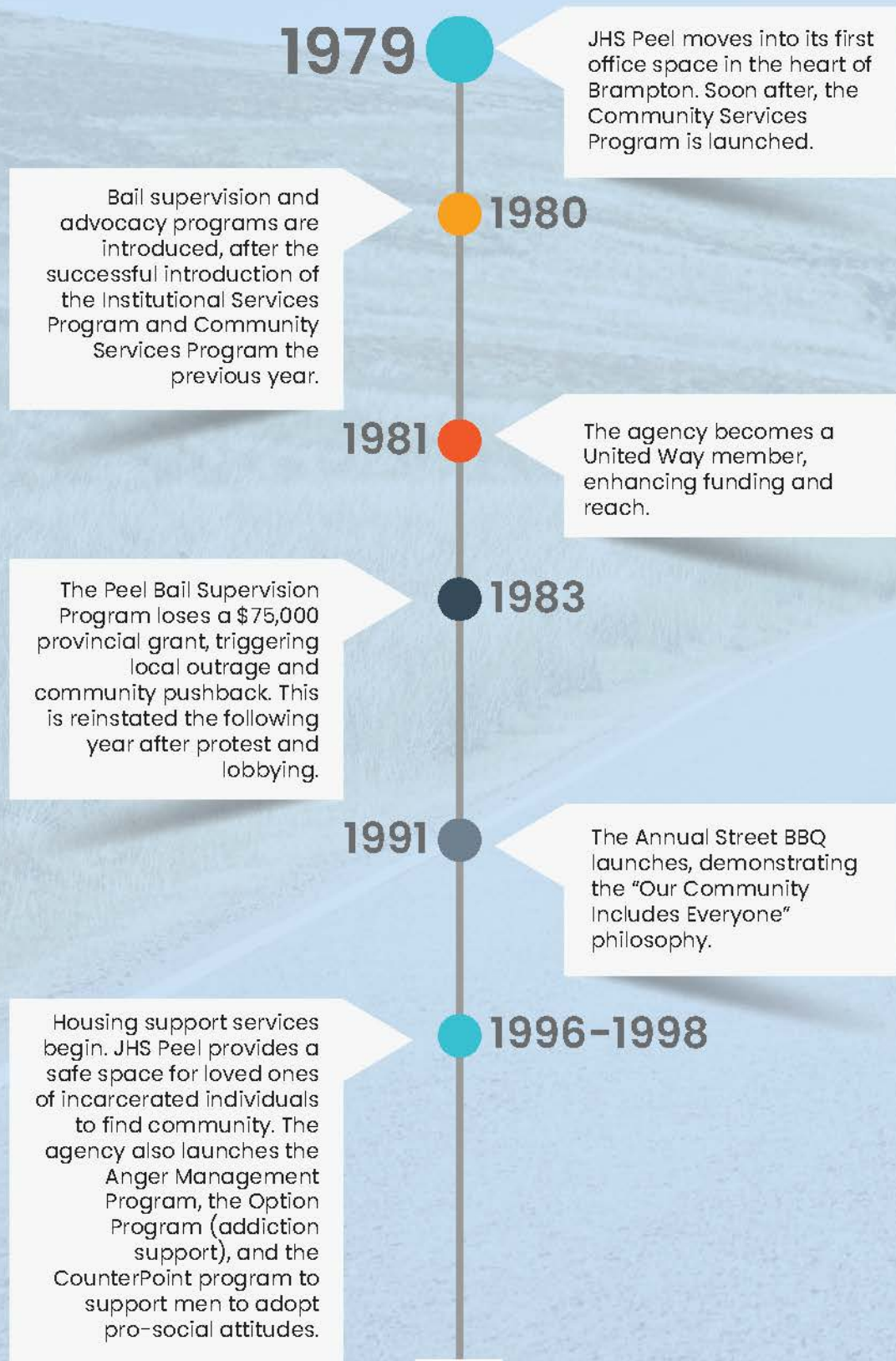
— Gary Reist, founding CEO (1989–2010)

"A lot of our early work was reactive programming," says Kara. "It was bail and parole programs; it was helping people find employment after being charged or convicted of a crime. And while some of that work is still necessary, today, the majority of our portfolio is rooted in prevention work. Even our reactive programs, like the Bail program, now have preventing recidivism as a primary objective."

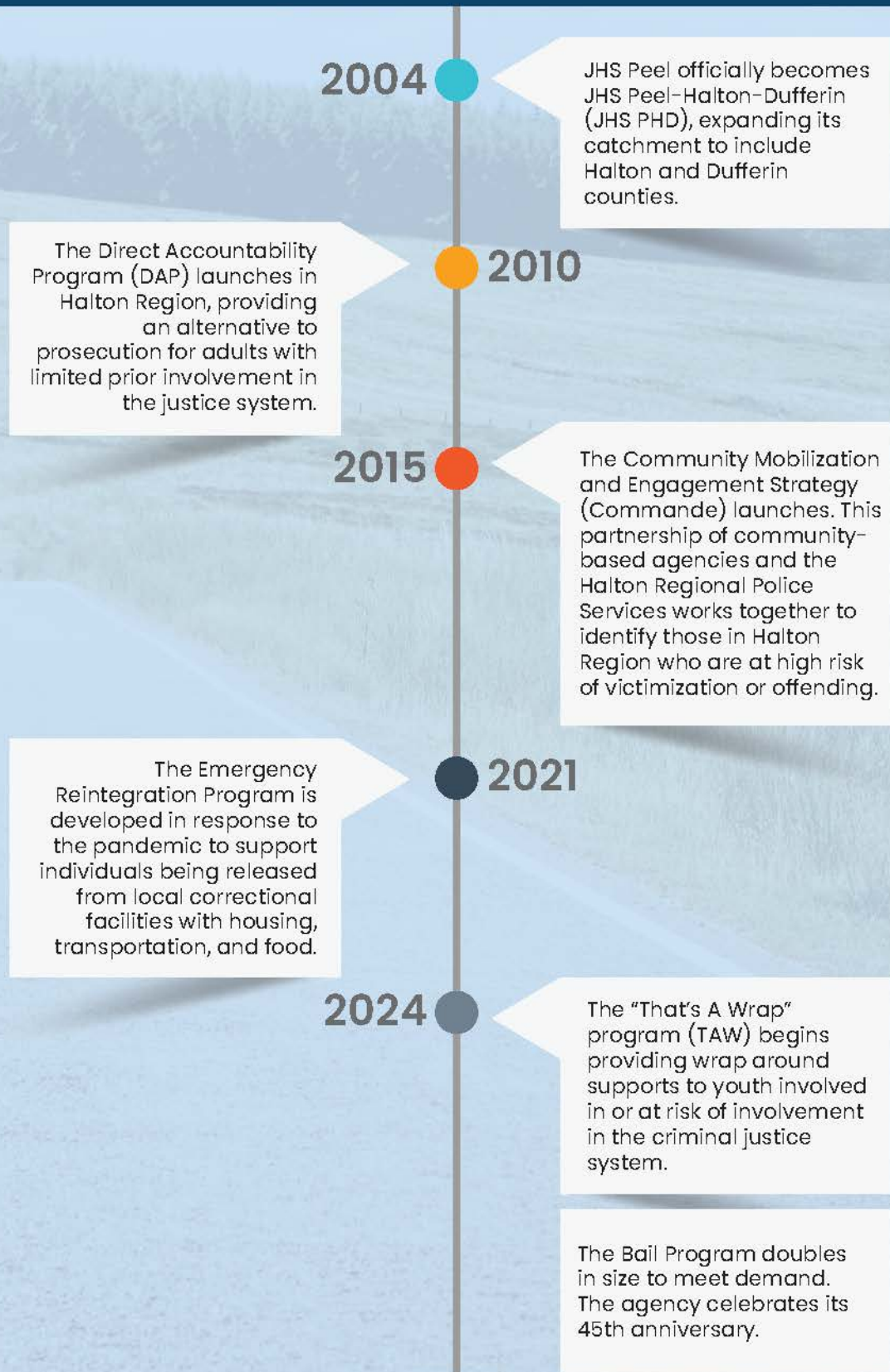
While police, prisons, and the court system are absolutely necessary — as are reactive measures for a small proportion of the population — we know that a humane approach helps to stop anti-social negative thinking from becoming a destructive cycle.

We empower clients by seeing them as individuals, with individual needs. With consideration of their unique history and the root causes behind their behaviour, clients start to better understand themselves, recognize their own strengths, and make the changes that will benefit them and the wider community.

Take a journey through our history client empowerment, and the root causes



to understand how community, of crime have informed who we are today.





"I love the MHAPS program so much. I will always be grateful for the companionship and resources I receive in a non-judgmental space like this. Whenever I start to spiral, I hear my worker telling me to trust the process, trust the work I've put into bettering my life, and I start to believe that maybe she's right, and maybe there really is a bright future for me ahead of all this."

"I've been really struggling with my mental health and my worker helped me advocate for myself. With her support, I decided to try mental health medicine for the first time and my worker supported me through every up and down."

"When my cat was ill and I needed to put her down, my worker offered to attend with me. I didn't take her up on the offer but to have someone who cared enough about me to be with me during my darkest hour made me feel like maybe my life isn't just a waste. I'm now headed out to Thailand for extended travels. My worker asked me to email her when I arrived so she knew I was safe and since my mom died, there's been nobody else that cared enough about me to ask."

"I don't want them to quit because I know what it's like."

How a program prioritizing lived experience transforms lives

A humane, compassionate approach, and treating every client as an individual, underpins everything at JHS PHD, and if one program provides evidence of this, it's Mental Health and Addiction Peer Support (MHAPS). Clients are referred to the program while on probation or parole, often having recently been incarcerated.

The program's unique power lies in the fact that every support worker has lived experience with mental health challenges, addiction, or both.

"One of the first things I tell my clients is that I was once in their shoes. We serve as inspiration or hope because they know in their head, 'hey this person has recovered and done well and was just like me at one time,'" explains Peer Support Worker Justin Hope, who is a recovered substance user.

As part of the support he provides, Justin often accompanies clients to group sessions like Alcoholics Anonymous, or probation office meetings. But he also tries to connect on a human level by supporting their personal interests.

"I go to the gym a lot — I used it, myself, as a means to recovery, so some of my clients venture into the same thing and we work out together."

The immediate goal of the program is harm reduction, which varies from making a client's lifestyle safer, to stopping negative habits and building new routines — there is no one size fits all.

"There are a lot of people just trying to survive day to day. So there are lots of setbacks along the way.

It's hard to have big-picture thinking when you're in crisis. There are lots of barriers and there are not many services who will stay connected to clients like mine. I'll stick with them. Why? Because if I discharge them, they have nothing," he explains.

Justin's client, Peter* had untreated schizophrenia when they first met. He was homeless and constantly in psychosis, meaning he couldn't hold attention or a conversation. Over several years, Justin supported him to get the medical care, shelter, and then housing he needed to build a positive future.

Today, Peter is happy, settled, and supported, living at a farm for people with schizophrenia. He has overcome drug addiction and is looking for a job.

For Justin, this encapsulates the true impact of his role.

"I remember going and seeing him and I'm bawling because I'm remembering where I met the guy and what he was like. He was doing just wonderfully," he recalls.

"From meeting us in psychosis, to now looking for work and living in this beautiful place. I think we saved his life, this program."

*Name changed to protect privacy.

The program's unique power lies in the fact that every support worker has lived experience with mental health challenges, addiction, or both.

By the numbers

98 active clients in the year

77 referrals

1062 sessions attended

947 hours of service

“Without this basic support, they might become involved or re-involved with the criminal justice system.”

How meeting immediate needs empowers clients and prevents crime

For many in our communities, the basic necessities we take for granted are out of reach. JHS PHD's Emergency Stabilization Program, funded through the Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation and Robert Kerr Foundation, aims to bridge the gaps, so that individuals who are struggling can build a positive future.

Catherine Wiggan, Manager of Community Services, is responsible for allocating the crucial funds within her programs.

“The funds are generally used for housing, food, and personal needs. It's things that clients can't afford, and aren't covered through other existing supports in the community,” Catherine explains, adding that most clients are living on low income, or are on Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

Catherine shares the story of one client who was facing eviction after her working hours were reduced. Through the program, she was offered first and last month payments while housing workers helped her find a place she could afford.

“Without this, she would have ended up in a shelter. She was on the brink of homelessness because of a situation she didn't understand,” she says.

Other times, the barrier a client faces is in being able to afford tenant insurance.

“Most landlords won't agree to someone moving into their unit without it. If a client has exhausted their discretionary funds, that's the end of the road. We've been able to help a few clients get this insurance and secure a home,” says Catherine.

Breaking down some of these barriers is crucial for client morale and engagement, meaning they're more likely to achieve their future goals.

Catherine explains: **“Because the client will say, ‘What's the point of doing counselling? That's not what I need right now. I need somewhere to live before we can talk about my stress and my trauma’. Those basic needs are a significant factor in their life situation.”**

Breaking down some of these barriers is crucial for client morale and engagement, meaning they're more likely to achieve their future goals.

“Staff also feel frustrated when they can't help. It might take them three weeks to find a landlord who's willing to rent to our client, only to realize they can't afford tenant insurance. That's

why this program is really appreciated by clients and caseworkers. It massively affects everyone's ability to be successful,” she continues.

The funding behind JHS PHD's core programs does not cover the support offered by the Emergency Stabilization Program, meaning that additional foundation dollars are needed.

“It's so important that we're able to keep securing funds to do this work,” Catherine says.

“For us it seems like a small token to assist clients in moving one step further. But to them, it's a big deal. When you've got so many barriers to overcome, it's transformative to feel like you're finally going in the right direction.”

By the numbers

200 emergency care backpacks distributed to individuals being released from various forms of custody

42 clients were supported with grocery gift cards due to food insecurity

11 clients were supported to stay in hotels/motels

3 clients had one-off support with rent payments

2 tents were supplied for clients who preferred to sleep rough

"My child and I were recently homeless due to a three-foot flood in our basement apartment. I did not have insurance.

We lost all our possessions. After a long stay in the shelter system, finally we have been able to find a new place to live and will be moving in soon. The problem was not having any funds for something as essential as tenant insurance. When starting over from the ground up, it makes things very challenging and incredibly stressful.

Thanks to this funding we have been able to secure tenant insurance for the whole year. This provides me with security and peace of mind. Knowing my child and I will have some help if the worst was to happen again. Thank you so much for your generous gift. It's more than money for us. It was a worry I no longer have to worry about."

"I almost thought I would remain homeless because I did not have the funds to pay for tenant insurance. JHS PHD has helped me to secure housing and finally move out of the shelter after two long years."



"I was in tears when I came to JHS PHD. I was off work because of a motor vehicle accident, so my income was very limited and the rent was climbing. I got a notice of eviction from the landlord, and I did not know what to do or where I would go with my two boys. After laying out my situation, I was told that I could be helped with my outstanding rent. After I collected all the relevant documents and sent them to him, I was approved and in no time my outstanding balance was cleared up. Today we are still housed thanks to JHS PHD. The program is a very good one and I know it will help many other people like myself to have a roof over their heads."

"I had just lost my job, and I was now on the verge of losing my home, so I was devastated. I was in arrears and could no longer afford to pay up the outstanding sum. To make matters worse, I also have a sick child and caring for him was very difficult. The current rate for rent on the market was unaffordable so I could not afford a new place anywhere else, so I needed to keep my current housing. Luckily, I heard of the Eviction Prevention Program and went to them seeking help. They helped me pay off the outstanding rent and my problems were solved. I am happy I found them."

“When people become homeless, it’s a precursor to criminal activities.”

How keeping people housed breaks the cycle

JHS PHD’s Eviction Prevention Program tackles one of the most significant root causes of crime: homelessness.

Eviction Prevention Worker Joseph Edwards takes a holistic approach to ensuring his clients stay housed, offering general counselling on budgeting, self-development, and employment alongside practical support.

Against a backdrop of high housing demand, astronomical rent costs, and increasing unemployment in Peel Region, the help offered by the program is essential.

“Landlords are raising rents and people can’t afford it,” Joseph explains. “And if they leave, they’re also not able to find another place for the rent they were paying. It’s a vicious cycle.”

This short-term program consists of six to eight sessions, delivered over the course of weeks or months. The program reduces the risk of eviction through client education and advocacy efforts or with financial assistance, where appropriate.

“I had a situation where a man in his seventies was being evicted illegally by his landlord. They were coming up with false claims in order to get him out. When I got involved, he was basically in tears. He’d lived there for more than 10 years and didn’t know what to do,” says Joseph.

“They brought him before the Landlord Tenant Board twice. I turned up with the client to the hearing and stood up for his rights. And today that client is still living in that building. So you make a lot of difference every day.”

Protecting tenant rights and fighting for fairer rent prices is crucial because the costs of the housing shortage are significant.

“When a person becomes homeless, you can start thinking about substance abuse coming in. You can start thinking about physical or sexual abuse coming in. Shoplifting, trespassing... so many crimes are the result of a person having nowhere to go,” Joseph explains.

Having seen these consequences in his previous work as a probation officer and then a bail supervisor, Joseph is more motivated than ever to be part of a preventative solution.

“We know that housing is a human right, so keeping people housed is our main intention. Not only are you potentially preventing a crime, but it’s essential for human dignity. And as an organization that is client-centered, that is people-centered, we would like to see a client living their best life. So we strive for that,” he concludes.

By the numbers

39 active clients in the year

33 referrals

127 sessions attended

98 hours of service



JHS Statistics

3 Service Departments



6 Service Locations



STAFF NUMBERS



47
FULL-TIME
STAFF



1,069
VOLUNTEER HOURS

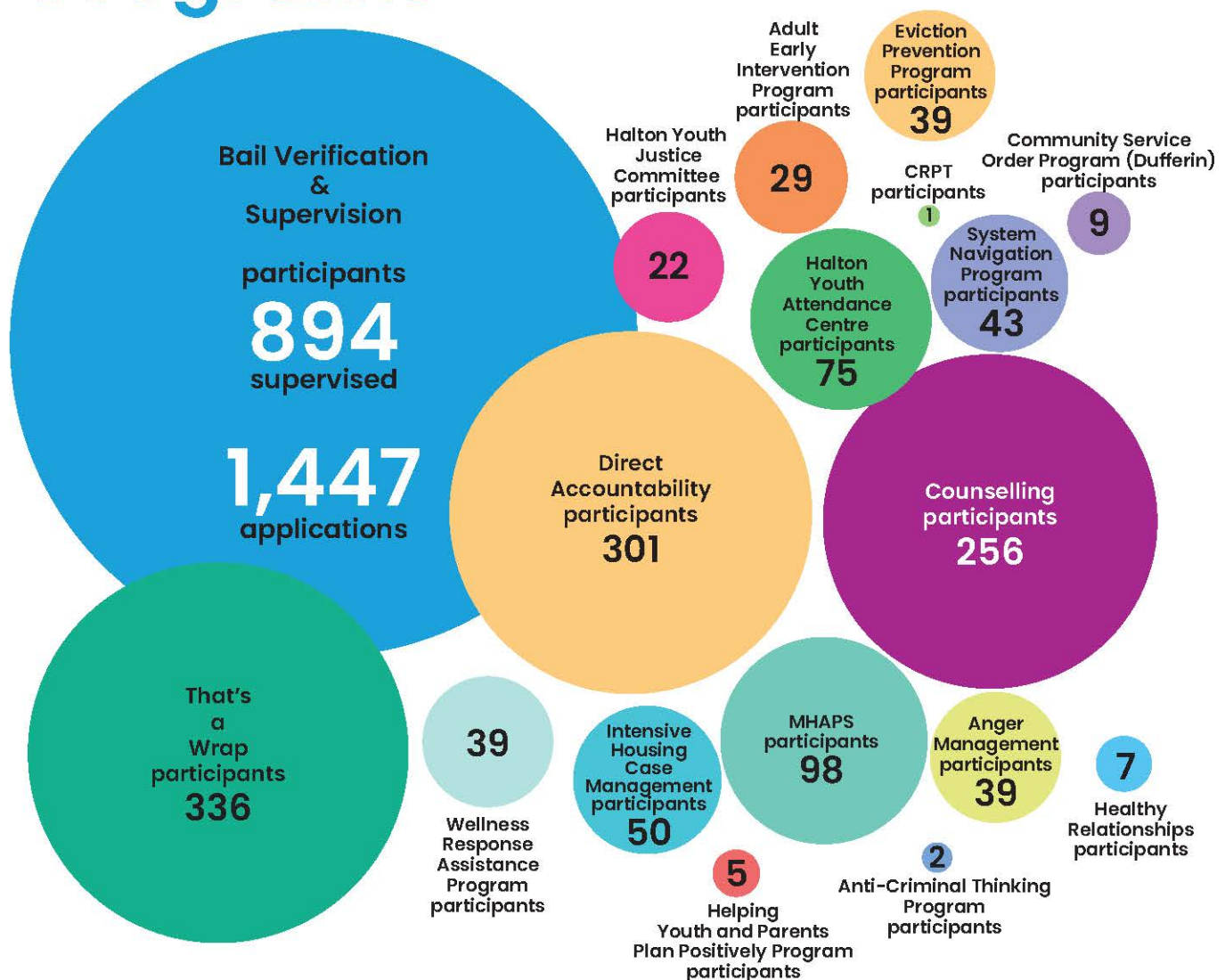


21
VOLUNTEERS



7
STUDENTS

Programs





Thank you!

We are immensely grateful to everyone who chooses to support our efforts in building safer communities for all. Every person that comes to JHS PHD comes to us with unique experiences and needs, and we thank every corporation, foundation, community member, and individual supporter who has helped them create positive futures for themselves.

To our funders: Your support is critical to our work, and your contributions make it possible for us to make a direct impact on the people we serve by helping to create genuine positive change in their lives. Thank you for your continued generosity.

To our donors: It's because of your support that we are able to continue providing our vital crisis services, while simultaneously working to create connected and safe communities where individuals thrive. Thank you for your generosity and for choosing to support the betterment of our community.

To our Board of Directors: We are extremely grateful to our Board of Directors for their strong and consistent support. We have been so fortunate to have their unwavering leadership to guide us through the past year.

Board of Directors

Executives

Pauline Wainwright, President
Rafiq Rokerya, Vice President
Peter Wood, Treasurer
Leonard Lyn, Secretary

Members

Keith Gilbert	Adam Cox
Saleha Khan	Trevor Guy
Fayorn John	Ruth Bannerman
Ann Christian-Brown	Jeanie Theoharis
Kyla Cassidy	

Funders	Programs
Ministry of the Attorney General	• Bail Verification and Supervision Program • Direct Accountability Program
Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services	• Halton Youth Attendance Centre • Halton Youth Justice Committee
Ministry of the Solicitor General	• Mental Health and Addiction Peer Support Program • Community Service Order Program
United Way of Greater Toronto	• Community Counselling Program • Eviction Prevention Program
United Way of Halton and Hamilton	• Wellness Response Assistance Program (WRAP) – Halton
Region of Peel	• Intensive Housing Case Management Program
Region of Halton	• That's A Wrap (TAW) • Adult Early Intervention Program
Robert Kerr Foundation	• Emergency Stabilization Program
Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation	• Emergency Stabilization Program

For our complete audited financial statements, please visit:
<https://johnhoward.on.ca/peel-halton-dufferin/us/>



Vision for tomorrow

This report has shown the huge impact our teams make every day — changing not just statistics but, even more importantly, real stories. Our humane approach enables us to address the root causes of crime both within the justice system and our wider community. That was as true 45 years ago as it is today.

But what can we do even better? To start, we're focusing on building an organization which is more culturally responsive and assertive for populations that continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system, such as Black and Indigenous folks.

Working closely with organizations like Roots Community Services and Grandmother's Voice, we'll better tailor our services to these individuals, and ensure we're effectively integrated into these communities. That way we can keep finding innovative ways to work with those who are in the system, but also advocate for the change that will keep them out of it.

Our second focus is on continuing to build strong programming that enables clients to break down the barriers they face. Many in our communities don't have access to the resources they need to thrive, and in uncertain times like these — when economic, social, and political conditions are challenging — we start to see increases in crime. So, this coming year, our programs must be truly responsive to client need.

The reality is that many of our programs have wait lists because the need for our services is so great. And we know that the longer people have to wait, the less likely they are to engage in our services, making it harder for us to address the root causes of crime.

With your help, we can respond quickly and effectively — catching people in the crucial moment when they're ready to change, and empowering them to do so. Support our work and your community today.

Our Mission

John Howard Society of Peel-Halton-Dufferin provides effective responses and vital services that empower individuals, foster well-being, and address the root causes of crime.

Our Vision

As experts in the reduction and prevention of crime, we are committed to creating connected and safe communities where individuals thrive.





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 @jhso

 johnhoward.on.ca/peel-halton-dufferin