

STRONGER COLLABORATIONS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES.

SIMCOE MUSKOKA FAMILY CONNEXIONS
ANNUAL REPORT
2024-25



Simcoe Muskoka
Family Connexions

Connexions Familiales
de Simcoe Muskoka



LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Hello, Bonjour, Aaniin, Bonjou,

We are honoured to share this year's Annual Report, reflecting our continued commitment to serving children, youth, and families across our communities. In 2025, we navigated ongoing challenges with determination and compassion, and we are proud of the progress made through the collective efforts of our staff, care providers, volunteers, and Board members.

This year, we responded to increasing demands in child welfare services, ensuring that children remained safely with their families in the vast majority of cases. We deepened our partnerships and expanded our internal foster care capacity, reducing reliance on external placements and prioritizing kinship arrangements whenever possible.

To address persistent gaps in placement and treatment options, we enhanced our specialized care programs, including a collaboration with Milestones Foster Homes. We also developed a Staff Model Homes Program and together these initiatives are helping us meet the complex needs of children and youth more effectively.

In Muskoka, our community advisory table continued to guide the implementation of recommendations from the Complex Mental Health Systems Review. This work is building a more responsive and coordinated network of care for families.

We reaffirmed our commitment to equity, truth, and reconciliation through ongoing learning, service improvements, and community engagement. Our equity strategy has been refreshed to embed culturally affirming and inclusive practices across all programs in our organization. We also strengthened our French language services and expanded support for newcomers through our New Immigrant Practice Leads group and multilingual resources.

Collaboration remained a cornerstone of our work. We advanced the four-year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan with municipal and service partners, and we continued efforts to prevent Human Sex Trafficking and support youth at risk. We launched an Infant and Early Mental Health Pathways framework. Fundraising efforts throughout the year helped us support basic needs for the families and youth we serve.

Our corporate services teams ensured that our operations remained strong and adaptive. We made strides in staff safety and wellbeing through training, resources, and the implementation of our health and safety handbook.

Our Board of Directors provided steadfast leadership, ensuring strong governance and a focus on sustainability and continuous improvement.

We are deeply grateful for the resilience and dedication shown by everyone involved during a year of transition and growth. The work we have done together in 2025 lays the foundation for a sustainable future where high-quality, inclusive services continue to support a better tomorrow for the children youth and families we serve.

Thank you, Merci, Miigwetch, Marsi.

GISÈLE FORREST
Chair, Board of Directors

GERALDINE DOOLEY-PHILLIPS
Executive Director



Our Vision

**Safe Kids.
Healthy Families.
Strong Communities.**



Our Values

WE

We honour **C**onnexions

We are **A**ccountable

Respect is essential

Equity is foundational



Our Purpose

**To build safety and well-being with
children, youth, families and
communities.**



Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities

We promote wellness, stability and a sense of belonging through effective services, quality care, relationship preservation, and connexions to community and identity.

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities

Our child welfare and child & youth mental health programs responded to changing needs in the community. Most service volumes increased, with few remaining consistent with the previous year. We had an increase in the number of cases and saw a significant increase in case complexity.

Highlights

9,168

child welfare referrals received
(+7% from last year)

2,866

Total Investigation Cases served
Out of families served, **101** children
came into care (-28% from last year)

8,101

of families served in total



752

Total Ongoing Cases served

381

Total Children & Youth In
Care served (-17% from
last year)



271

remained in out of home
placements at year end



19

16 youth in care graduated from secondary school
and 3 graduated from post-secondary school

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities



6

new foster homes approved from ongoing recruitment campaign (events, media releases, radio & print interviews, school boards partnerships and advertising)

This provided **12** additional placements and more children being able to remain within their community



17

adoptions finalized
(+31% from last year)



117

kinship service placements,
on average

49%

of children who are temporarily in need of alternative care remained with their kin

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities

Child & Youth Mental Health Services

312



589

sessions
completed

brief service Counselling Clinic clients served by CYMH



153

crisis assessment
/interventions to 92
individuals

235

out of 532 children eligible for service presented
with **Complex Mental Health Needs**

Child, youth & family therapy (186), intensive services (65) and youth served by the Youth Justice Program (34) remained consistent with previous years.

We continued to provide service through the Coordinated Service Planning Program to 55 children, youth and families with complex special needs.



Innovation, Accountability & Outcomes

We provide evidence informed services and maximize resources through a commitment to continuous improvement, privacy and accountability for outcomes.

Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

Child & Youth Mental Health Services

We completed the Complex Mental Health System Review in Muskoka through community partner and children, youth and family engagement.



This review identified 3 major pillars:



Prevention and Early Intervention: to increase community resources and capacity and build a community that fosters a sense of belonging and breaks down stigma and systemic barriers.

Local Integration of Mental Health Services for Children and Youth:

to develop a comprehensive and integrated mental health service system, centralize the Muskoka area mental health intake and waitlist, and provide more inclusive, responsive and transformative care.



Cross-Sectoral Collaboration to Serve Children, Youth and Families with High Needs within Complex

Environments: to establish a flexible wraparound protocol and to collaborate and advocate across sectors to drive system improvements.



We co-led in a CYMH **Complex Mental Health System Review** in Simcoe as Child Welfare partners.



Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

Child Welfare Services

We continued to improve our **Compliance** to Child Protection Standards from 90% to 94% on average. We also averaged 87% compliance in the Extended Society Care Review



We increased **Identity Based Data entry** from 87% to 95% over the last year

We finalized the **Child and Youth Service Manual** to provide quality service to children and youth we serve in the community.



We advanced our **Anti-Human Trafficking** service response through multiple partnerships and strategies.

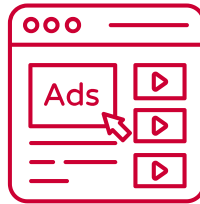
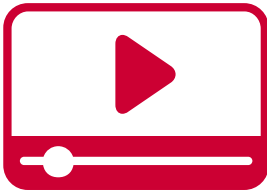
We finalized the **French Language Services (FLS) Training Curriculum** to provide an understanding of the importance of delivering FLS to our community, of the legislative & Ministry requirements around an active offer of service, along with telling the story of lived experiences of our francophone service users.

Bonjour

Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

Foster Caregiver Recruitment and High Needs Youth Strategy Implementation

The agency, in partnership with the FFA executive focused on Foster Care Provider retention through creating opportunities to come together.



We strengthened our **Foster recruitment initiatives** to attract more foster care providers, including a new video recruitment campaign with testimonies, advertising in community centers, partnerships with school boards and community resources (libraries, Barrie Colts, etc.).

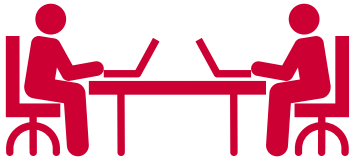
We are developing a
Staff Model Home Program
and we partnered with Milestones and DBCFS to keep children with complex needs safe and well in our community.



We successfully obtained a
Foster Care License.
This included youth interviews which highlighted a high level of care experience to be in their foster home placements.

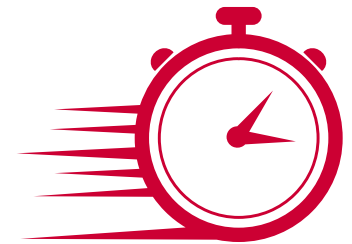
Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

Corporate Services



We focused our **Property Strategy** on better serving communities: completion of move to the Orillia new office and cooperative space & advancement to the Bell Farm office development plan.

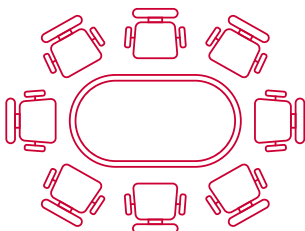
We made significant progress in organizational efficiencies and cost reduction strategies



We completed the first phase of the **New Reporting Dashboard System** to have timely access to client data

IT

We onboarded 92 care providers on Agency e-mail address to ensure timely and effective communication with our care providers.



We rolled out the new **OfficeRnD** online desk/room booking system to reduce our footprint and be more efficient in all our offices.

Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

Internal/HR

As a diverse and progressive organization, our people are our strength and we are committed to nurturing talent from within. To date, we have onboarded 120 staff to our performance management and evaluation system, which emphasizes our internal commitment to continuous growth and development.



Focus on

Staff Safety & Wellbeing

in collaboration with the Worker Safety Group (7 sessions held), Joint H&S Committees and the Social Committee, and through the development of a comprehensive plan. This also included improvements to the worker safety handbook and H&S policy enhancements.



Truth & Reconciliation

We commit to truth and
reconciliation with Indigenous
families and communities.

Truth & Reconciliation



We completed the **Indigenous Consultation Panel Design**

Ongoing training deployment for all service
delivery staff on

An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families

towards deepening the agency's approach to
services to Indigenous communities.



192 Service staff received the 2-day training from **RAMA**
Gdaankoobijiganaanig Connecting to our Ancestors.



Ongoing commitment to consultation and planning
for services to Indigenous Families

Continued & ongoing partnership commitment
with Indigenous Service agencies such as Métis
Nation of Ontario, local friendship centers and
First Nation communities.



The background of the slide features a silhouette of a family—a man, a woman, and a child—playing in a grassy field at sunset. The man and woman are standing and reaching up towards the child, who is being tossed into the air. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange, with scattered clouds. The overall mood is warm and positive.

Effective Communication & Partnership

We hear and value the voices of children, youth and families; partner with communities, colleagues and stakeholders to build networks; and advocate.

Effective Communication & Partnership

Fundraising and donations

Fundraising and donations through community partners and local businesses help fund our programs throughout the year to support families. This includes basic needs, summer camps, back-to-school and holiday assistance.

\$941,399

total in donations
(financial & in-kind)

\$125,309

collected through Holiday
donations



\$587,089

gifted through in-kind donations

\$229,001

given through other programs



5,381

total requests filled* for
families & individuals*

*Some of the individuals are counted within
the number of families

116



volunteers

134

independent youth supported
during the Holiday Program

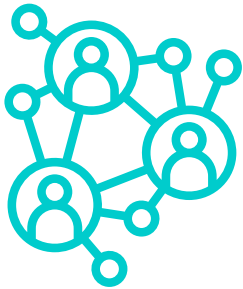
354,394

KMs driven

Effective Communication & Partnership

Fundraising

We received financial support through **8** community grants to enhance our community programs.



We strengthened our partnership with the **Barrie Chamber of Commerce** by attending networking events to develop fundraising opportunities.

We received major support from multiple community businesses to enhance our community programs and serve even more community clients.



We celebrated another successful Holiday Program thanks to our ongoing **CTV Toy Mountain** partnership

Effective Communication & Partnership

Community Partnerships

With support from the Ontario Education Champion Team (OECT) fund, we partnered with Parents Against Racism, Simcoe County (PARSC) and Oshun Hair Salon to deliver 5

Rooted in Love workshops

The goal was to transform the experiences for racialized Black children and youth in care and set our non-Black care providers and staff for success when delivering service.



We received positive feedback from
Black and Indigenous communities
we work with about the service our agency
provides to those communities.

We renewed our partnership with dozens of local camps across Simcoe & Muskoka and the GTA to provide various and diverse options to children through our **Camp Program.**



Effective Communication & Partnership

We offered **32** duty to report presentations to community partners to educate them on child welfare and their responsibilities.



We strengthened our
Practice & Equity Leads Strategy
through enhancing staff expertise and
community connections to ensure peers provide
quality in service delivery.

Events & Celebrations

We continued to participate in multiple
Pride Events to celebrate and show our
continued support to the 2SLGBTQ+ community.



We attended the
Ride for refuge
event to fundraise for our Anti-
Human Trafficking initiatives.

A photograph of three diverse individuals smiling and embracing. In the foreground, a Black man with a mustache is smiling broadly, wearing a green and blue striped garment. Behind him, a woman with dark hair and teal eye makeup is smiling, wearing an orange and white polka-dot top. To the right, a woman with blonde hair and green eye makeup is smiling, wearing a red and orange striped garment. The background is a solid yellow color.

Equitable Practices

We advance an organizational culture, workplace, policies, programs and services that are equitable, inclusive, and trusted. We ensure the provision of active offer of French language services.

Equitable Practices

We made significant progress in our 3-year equity plan and established a robust equity strategy advanced through all of our Equity Committees.

Staff Learning & Development and support

We completed a condensed **Sexual Orientation, Gender, Identity and Equity (SOGIE) training**

with Care Providers and provided multiple trainings for staff, thanks to our 3 certified SOGIE in-house trainers.



We launched **Equity, SOGIE and Anti-Black Racism trainings** for Managers to enhance our service delivery for all clients.



We offered two sessions of the Trauma Informed Practice - Healing Centred Engagement Workshop, and Equity training.

We created a new **Avatar, new preferred names and pronouns process** in CPIN to assist in easily identifying when a preferred name and/or pronouns are identified.



Equitable Practices

Service Delivery



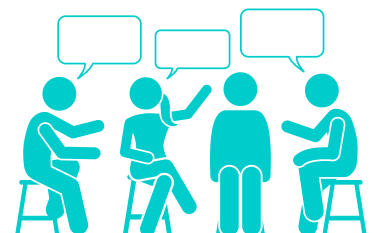
We continued to update **policies, procedures, processes & service offerings** using an equity-based lens.

We created and launched the **Identity and Disclosure of Records Consent** document so children and youth who self-identity as 2SLGBTQIA+ can indicate who does and does not know about their sexual/gender identity.



We updated our **Client Feedback Form** to include cultural identity and equitable services.

We are developing a more inclusive **Panel** to provide affirming services to families of African-decent, Indigenous families, 2SLGBTQIA+ families and Latino/x families.



Equitable Practices

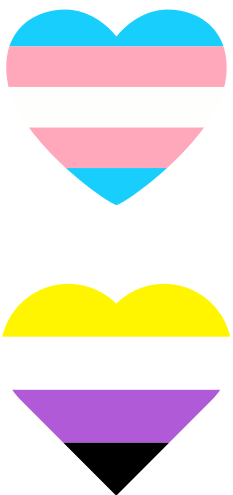
We are piloting the **OACAS SOGIE assessment and decision-making tool** which is looking at effective ways to integrate SOGIE affirming practices across the agency's service delivery continuum.



We launched the **New Immigrant Practice Leads group** and created brochures in multiple languages to better support new immigrants in our community.

We developed a **Cultural Competency Procedure and Brochure** which includes our commitment to honouring culture and identity.

Community



We created the **Transgender Non-Binary Healthcare Support & Services Task Force**

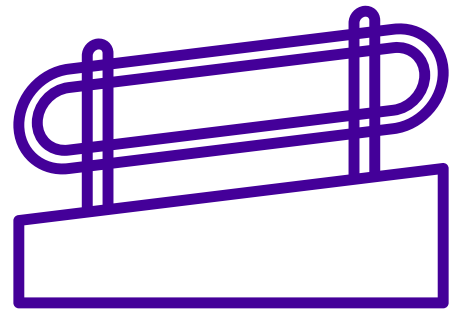
in the MAOHT, comprised of several Primary Care providers, community mental health services & coordinators as well as several folks with lived identities. The goal is to build capacity and support within the Primary Health community to support gender-affirming care.

Equitable Practices



We continued to advance our
Welcoming Spaces Strategy
in our offices to create a more inclusive
workplace for staff and clients.

We completed the construction of the
Accessibility ramp
at Barrie office to advance AODA
requirements and offer better access to clients.



The agency continues to support the work of equity in the sector through
its membership to OACAS's provincial committees and initiatives, and
participation in CMHO's community of practice.



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies



Children's Mental Health Ontario
Santé mentale pour enfants Ontario

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

For the year ended March 31	2025	2024
Revenues		
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	\$ 50,359,575	\$ 49,433,110
Ministry of Health	\$ 2,336,756	2,369,016
Other	\$ 4,267,395	4,136,419
Gross Revenues	\$ 56,963,726	55,938,545
Expenses		
Administration and other	\$ 18,451,476	18,820,994
Boarding rate payments	\$ 13,179,999	12,284,260
Salaries and wages	\$ 28,394,059	27,999,227
Gross Expenses	\$ 60,025,534	59,104,481
Excess of expenses over revenues for the year	\$ (3,061,808)	\$ (3,165,936)
Onetime accumulated deficit funding for previous period	3,065,000	-
Excess of revenues over expenses for the year	3,192	(3,165,936)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-25

BOARD CHAIR:

GISELE FORREST

VICE CHAIR:

MARY-ANNE DENNY-LUSK

TREASURER:

MARY-ANNE DENNY-LUSK

SECRETARY:

DEBBIE OPOKU-MULDER

STEVE CLEMENT

ROBERT GERBRANDT

ALISON GREGORY

LYNDA HOKSBERGEN

GWEN LINDSAY

KENNY MACDONALD

MICHAEL MIDDLETON

HANS MUNTZ

TAMARA OBEE

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de Simcoe Muskoka