 counselling connect
counseling on connecte



Year in Review

2022-2023

Context

Counselling Connect – Counseling en connecte is a groundbreaking inter-OHT initiative, founded by the Ottawa Health Team-Équipe Santé Ottawa. This web-based platform offers easy access to brief counselling (1-3 sessions) and support groups in Ottawa and the surrounding areas. This allows individuals and families to receive the help they need in a safe and accessible way.

Counselling Connect was launched at the beginning of the pandemic to address the increasing mental health, substance use health and addictions needs of children, youth, adults, and families. During the past three years, more than 30 community organizations have come together to provide brief counselling and support groups to more than 24,000 clients, making a significant impact on mental health in the region.

In response to growing demand, Counselling Connect has expanded its services this year, introducing new counselling services in Mandarin and support groups. To make it easier for clients to book sessions, the platform has partnered with 2-1-1, making it easy for people without web access to book by phone.

Counselling Connect has also developed a robust evaluation framework and dashboard. This allows the initiative to track and demonstrate its impact on the community. This framework has been instrumental in contributing to ongoing quality improvement.

This document highlights Counselling Connect's most significant contributions across three key themes: ease of access and client choice, equity, and system integration and scaling potential. Through its innovative approach and commitment to community, Counselling Connect has become a leading force in the provision of brief mental health, substance use health, and addictions counselling and group supports.

Ease of Access and Client Choice

Counselling Connect provides clients with rapid access to care on their own schedule. Clients can book through the website, by calling 2-1-1 or through the over 450 health and social service providers with direct booking access.

"I was unsure about using an online service, it was great! Simple and not like other services I've tried to use in the past"

- Counselling Connect Client



Data Snapshot

90%

of clients were able to get an appointment at a time that worked for their schedule

94%

of clients agreed it was easy to book an appointment

83%



of clients spoke with a counsellor within a week

Equity Focus

Counselling Connect provides counselling services with an equity lens to support equitable health outcomes. The platform offers tailored services for African, Caribbean and Black; 2SLGBTQ+; Indigenous; Francophone; Arabic-speaking; and Mandarin-speaking communities. Counselling Connect not only supports equity seeking communities, it is actively working with specific partners from those communities to deliver services. By providing culturally responsive counselling services, Counselling Connect is helping more people from diverse backgrounds access the support they need for better mental health outcomes.

Data Snapshot

2,173 counselling sessions made available for African, Caribbean and Black; 2SLGBTQ+; and Indigenous clients

1,417 sessions made available in French, Arabic and Mandarin

Among Counselling Connect clients from equity-deserving groups:

1,357 accessed counselling for the first time through the Counselling Connect platform



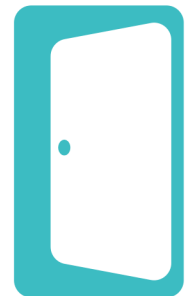
80% agreed that the care they received helped them deal more effectively with life's challenges

72% reported a decrease in the severity of their concern following an appointment

70% reported a decrease in difficulty coping with their concern following an appointment

997

would have not sought support without access to the Counselling Connect platform



"The ability to talk to another minority practitioner has been instrumental in me being able to connect with my healing journey. I cannot express how needed this service is. If I could offer such a service to all minority people, I would. The level of healing and therapy we need is vastly understated. It will not fix everything, but it is a good place to start."

- Counselling Connect ACB client

"In a climate of increasingly visible transphobia and a backlash against gender affirming care, I've heard many trans, nonbinary, and gender diverse or questioning people express how meaningful it has been for them to have a counsellor who can provide a supportive, gender-affirming space and also information about further resources and supports."

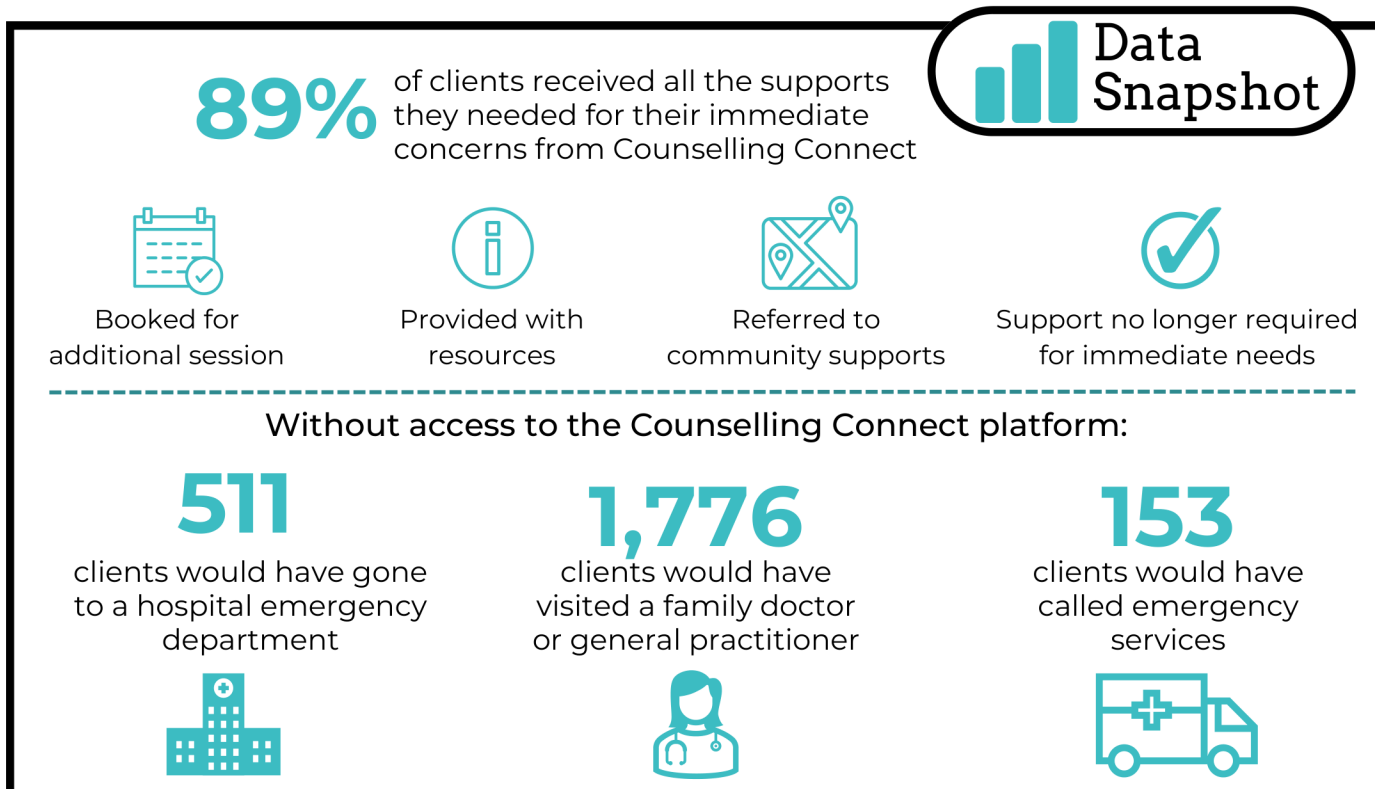
- Counselling Connect 2SLGBTQ+ Counsellor

System integration and scaling

Counselling Connect is contributing to systems-level outcomes that have the potential to transform the way mental health and addiction services are delivered in Ontario. One of the key outcomes is a reduction in visits to primary care and emergency departments for mental health, substance use health and addictions issues. By providing timely access to brief counselling and support, Counselling Connect is helping to divert people from wait lists and is meeting immediate needs as people wait for more specialized services.

Counselling Connect achieves this by working closely with other service providers and initiatives like Access MHA and OneCallOneClick to collectively deliver a stepped-care approach to support clients living with mental health, substance use health and addictions issues. Furthermore, Counselling Connect is an example of inter-OHT collaboration. The platform was founded by the Ottawa Health Team but has since expanded to include Archipel and Four Rivers health teams.

Finally, Counselling Connect is easily scalable to the wider region. The initiative's success in delivering equitable, client-centered, and effective mental health and addiction services has the potential to serve as a model for other regions across Ontario and beyond. Through its commitment to inter-OHT collaboration and systems-level outcomes, Counselling Connect is helping to transform the landscape of mental health and addiction services in Ontario.



"I regularly refer clients to this service and, in follow up conversations, they often highlight the user-friendly site. The population we serve face a number of psychosocial stressors and having to navigate a complex referral process when in crisis can be daunting. In my experiences, Counselling Connect has been straight-forward and clients love being able to access telephone and video counselling in a timely manner."

- Crisis Counselor from the Ottawa Paramedic Service Mental Wellbeing Response Team



The Walk-In
Counselling Clinic



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