



Discovery House  
*domestic violence ends here.*

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019-2020

Hope • Healing • Transformation

A place of hope where  
women and children heal,  
rebuild their lives, and become  
equipped to live independently  
free from domestic violence.

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We honour and acknowledge the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Siksika, the North and South Piikuni Nations, and the Kainai Tribe, and other members of the Treaty Seven First Nations: the Tsuut'ina Nation, and the three Bands of the Stone Nakoda Nations; Chiniki, Wesley, and Bearspaw. The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III, and all people who have made their home in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.



# Discovery House

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discoveryhouse.ca

## Our Mission

To end the traumatic cycle of domestic violence for women and children.

## Our Vision

Our communities are free of domestic violence.

## Our Values

### Safety

We are in the safety business.

### Compassion

We are privileged to engage with people at points of extreme vulnerability.

### Excellence

We are committed to best practice in our programs, operations, and governance.

### Collaboration

There is strength in numbers.

### Urgency

Our work saves lives.

# LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR AND INTERIM CEO

In 2019-20 Discovery House Family Violence Prevention Society supported 633 children and women fleeing domestic violence through our supportive transitional housing program.

The achievements highlighted in this report could not be possible without the commitment and support of our funders and donors, partner agencies, research institutions, volunteers, staff, and board of directors. Since 2015, only 3% of families returned to us for services — a testament to the impact of our evidence-based and leading best-practice programs.

This fiscal year was incredibly productive. We focused on strengthening our organizational capacity and the impact of our work. We strategically shifted our paradigm to place a greater focus on addressing children’s trauma. This shift redirected our programs to increase mom’s understanding of the impact of trauma on the developing brain and to strengthen the attachments with her children. We reviewed and updated program logic models, implemented valid instruments to ensure data integrity for effective program evaluation, developed and implemented our own model for change called “Prevention and Intervention Model to Eradicate the Traumatic Cycle of Domestic Violence”, and updated policies and processes.

The fourth quarter came with new challenges. We navigated the impact of a global pandemic and implemented our service continuity plan. We are grateful to our dedicated staff and expertise of the board who worked tirelessly to support vulnerable families in our community during this time.

As we look forward to celebrating our 40th year in 2020-21, we are humbled to continue the important work that is at the heart of what we do at Discovery House: providing safe and supportive transitional housing to women and children fleeing domestic violence and providing them the opportunity to heal, rebuild their lives and become equipped to live independently free from domestic violence. We are battling a domestic violence epidemic and continue to partner with the Universities of Calgary, Pittsburgh, and Harvard as we explore innovative ways to mitigate the adverse impacts of trauma and stop the cycle of abuse. If ever there was a time for us to take the lead, it is now — and that is exactly what we are doing. We are grateful and honored that you have chosen to partner with us on this meaningful journey.

Simon Scott, Board Chair

Esther Elder, Interim CEO

## OUR 2019/20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jason Balakas

Renata Colic

Ellen Embury

Cindy Gray

Geri Greenall

Kathy Greenwood

Susanne Huggard

Joel Irwin

Pamela Lawrence

Nicole Letourneau

Bob MacDougall

Carolyn Moore-Robin

Tim Moro

Simon Scott

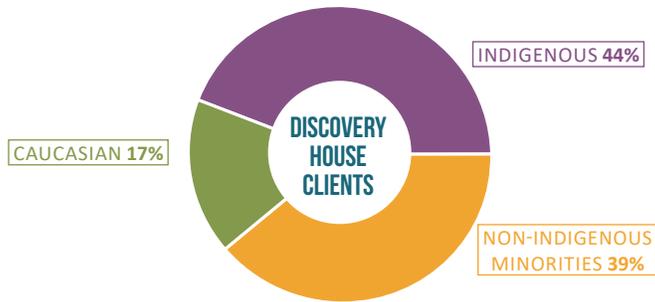
We welcome new directors Taylor Smith, Carli Tyson, and Pamela Wicks to our 2020-21 board of directors and thank outgoing directors for their service: Jason Balakas, Renata Colic, Ellen Embury, Cindy Gray, Kathy Greenwood, and Carolyn Moore-Robin.

## RESPOND

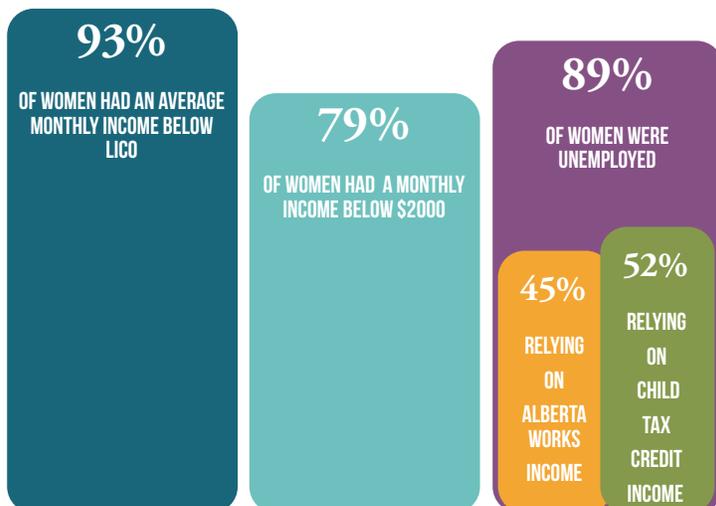
Ensure that all women and children have the supports they need to feel safe and free from domestic violence

### SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

From April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 we provided supportive housing to 423 children and 210 women fleeing domestic violence and experiencing homelessness and poverty. Tragically, we turned away almost as many due to our capacity limitations — 611 children and women were turned away.



Upon arrival, families identified the following barriers:



2019 Monthly Low Income Cut Off (LICO) - \$3230 for 3 persons

### FACILITY AND OPERATIONS

Annual upgrades and maintenance to our facility ensures safety and the comforts of home for our families.

- Relocated and expanded the pantry to ensure 24/7 accessibility and to better address food insecurity
- Installed flatscreen televisions in all 19 independent apartments
- Created The Nest, a child-friendly reading space, in partnership with Calgary Reads
- Renovated the art room
- IT upgrades to improve security and wifi service for families
- Replaced all office carpets
- Reduced security costs 18% by hiring two security guards and utilizing an external company for weekend and vacation coverage
- Upgraded our security system
- Reduced snow removal costs by 50%
- Replaced the roof

53 VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED

1282 HOURS SUPPORTING FAMILIES' NEEDS



*"I want to tell you something, my mom doesn't cry anymore so now me and my brother are happy."* - a youth client

*"There aren't as many arguments at home and I'm not fighting with my siblings. It's kind of weird how everyone is getting along now."* - a youth client

# PREVENT

Prevent domestic violence from happening in the first place and prevent any re-occurrence

## CONTINUUM OF PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING

In 2019-20, we made a strategic shift to more intentionally focus on children in order to break the generational cycle of domestic violence. We also increased the emphasis on mom's understanding of the impact of trauma on the developing brain and protective factors for resiliency.

Our core work is based on the following models: Housing First, Intensive Case Management, Trauma-Informed, Strength-Based and Client-Centered.



Families receive wrap-around support and are assigned an intensive case manager, a child & youth case manager, a mental health clinician, and a housing liaison. Women and children have barrier-free access to our trauma-informed, inclusive, and culturally appropriate continuum of prevention and intervention programs and services. Programs are responsive to the needs of the family, and flexible to allow for proportionate and responsive delivery to the degree and level of presenting need. We have a robust evaluation system and use valid instruments to track progress and demonstrate impact.

**80%** OF CHILDREN UNDER AGE 5 IMPROVED EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

**76%** OF CHILDREN DECREASED THEIR LEVEL OF STRESS, ANXIETY, PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOURS

**76%** OF CHILDREN IMPROVED THEIR ABILITY TO COPE EFFECTIVELY WITH CHALLENGES, SELF-ESTEEM, AND CONFIDENCE



297 women and children transitioned out of our program into independent and stable housing free from domestic violence, which is tracked at three, six, and 12 months.

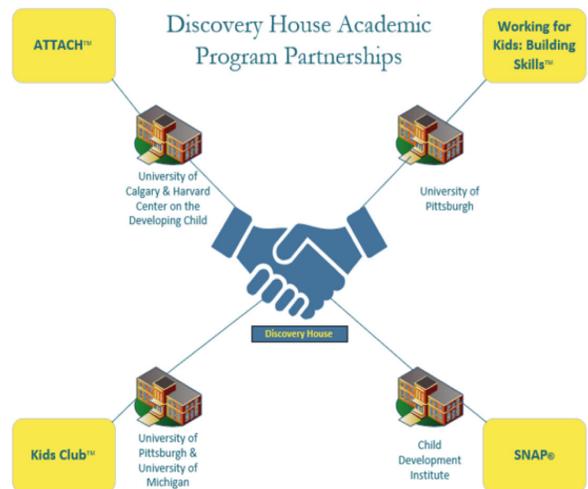


# LEAD

Empower board and staff to lead a mission-driven, inspired, effective organization

## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Our strategic plan identifies three guiding pillars: Respond, Prevent and Lead. Our partnerships with academia ensure we deliver evidence-based and best practice programs.



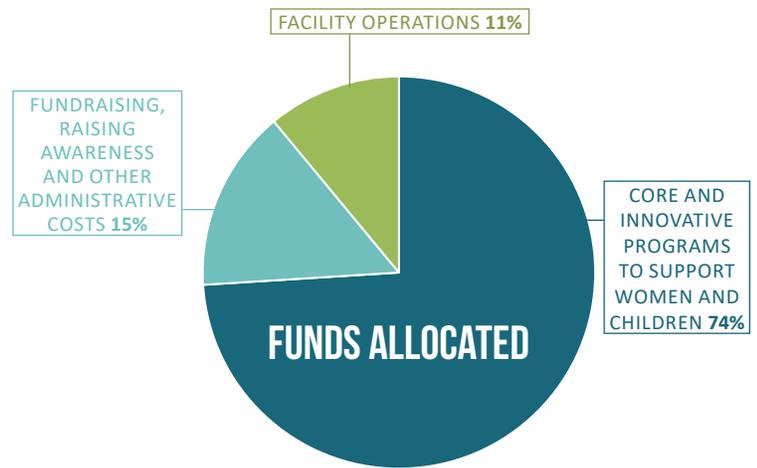
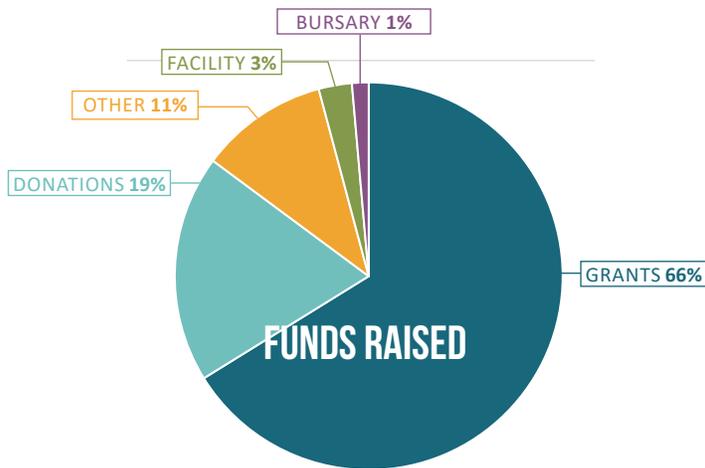
## LEADERSHIP AND CONFERENCES

As leaders within the domestic violence sector, we regularly present at conferences. In November, one of our onsite Elders presented at the Bridging Communities Conference at Mount Royal University, on Indigenization and Reconciliation. In November, we also presented with other members of the Healing Circle team on adapting Kids' Club and Moms' Empowerment for Indigenous families. In February, Women's Shelters Canada Conference in Ottawa invited Discovery House to speak on a Community of Practice. In March, our Manager of Programs and Clinical Services presented at Canadian Domestic Violence Conference (CDVC6) in Halifax, on Becoming a Centre of Excellence.

## BRAIN STORY CERTIFIED

All staff are required to complete brain story certification through the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative to ensure a common understanding of the core story of brain development, mental health, and addiction. Children need support to develop their executive functioning and self-regulation, overcome toxic stress, and build solid brain architecture. Discovery House supports moms in creating the nurturing experiences children need for positive development so that they can achieve their potential.





## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Abuse is about power and control and breaking down a woman's self-esteem and sense of self-worth is part of maintaining that power and control. Leaving the relationship may seem like an easy solution but many survivors feel they do not have a choice. The complexities around leaving include a fear of being homeless and losing custody of their children, a decline in living standards for themselves and their children as they lack the means to support themselves, and religious or cultural beliefs and practices amongst other concerns. Studies show that the most dangerous time for a woman is immediately after they leave their abuser — this is when they are at a high risk of femicide.

In 2019-20, although we provided supportive transitional housing to 633 children and women, we turned away 611 due to capacity issues.

We need your support to ensure that women and children fleeing domestic violence can access safe and stable housing, and receive the support they need to heal, rebuild, and live independently free from domestic violence. We will continue to have a strong focus on supporting children with programs that promote healthy brain development, secure attachment, and resiliency.

- ▶ In Canada, a woman is killed by a current or former intimate partner every six days (the number of domestic homicides in 2019 equals the totals from both 2017 and 2018). (Alberta Council of Women's Shelters' 2019 report)
- ▶ 73% of police-reported intimate partner violence in Calgary were females. (Stats Canada 2020)
- ▶ In 2019, 23,247 women, children and seniors in Alberta were turned away from shelters compared to approximately 16,000 in 2018. The number of women turned away from Alberta shelters increased by 40%. (Alberta Council of Women's Shelters' 2019 report)
- ▶ The economic costs of intimate partner violence against Canadian women are valued at \$4.8 billion annually. (Ting, Hoddenbagh, McDonald and Scrim 2012 as cited in Status of Women Canada, 2018).

Discovery House and the families we serve are grateful to our funders, donors, volunteers, and community partners. Thanks to your support, hundreds of women and children are now living independently and free from domestic violence.



We are proud to be the top social services charity in Canada, as rated by *MoneySense* magazine. Discovery House was awarded top marks across the board in the 2019 Charity 100, including an A+ in both fundraising and charity efficiency.

You can give to Discovery House with confidence, knowing that your donation will have the greatest impact.



**Discovery House**  
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**Discovery House Family Violence Prevention Society**

PO Box 85058, Albert Park PO  
Calgary, AB T2A 7R7

**Charitable Registration Number**

11882 3483 RR0001

**Alberta Societies Act Registration Number**

50249381

[www.discoveryhouse.ca](http://www.discoveryhouse.ca)

# THANK YOU

The work highlighted in this report would not be possible without the support of our community partners, funders, dedicated staff, volunteers and Board of Directors.