

# Ensuring Service Success



## Board Chair and Executive Director's Message

Over the last year, Abrigo has focused on the return to program and service levels that closely resembled pre-pandemic days. Twelve months ago, we were in a time of transition. Today, Abrigo has emerged from the pandemic a much stronger organization and has returned to delivering our normal array of programs and services.

For three decades our agency has focused on providing unparalleled care for our clients. What was key throughout the last 12 months was ensuring that our programs, delivered virtually, via telephone counselling, or traditional in-person sessions, were meeting the diverse and unique needs of every client. "Ensuring Service Success" was our focus for the year and hence, the title of our 2022/2023 Annual Report.

Over the last year, Abrigo saw a significant increase in the number of clients presenting to Abrigo with food and housing insecurities. The lingering effects of the pandemic coupled with sky-high inflation, rising food costs and astronomical rent increases severely impacted the daily lives of countless individuals and families in Toronto.

This resulted in Abrigo counsellors facing challenges like never before to assist those in need. Of course, this pales in comparison to the men, women and children facing these issues directly, but we must recognize and applaud our dedicated Abrigo team for continually doing all they could to provide outstanding service to all our clients over the last year.

Our Violence Against Women (VAW) program continued to see a large number of clients. We were not alone. Across the province more than 30 municipalities, including the City of Toronto, recognized intimate partner violence as an epidemic. With two in five women reporting that they have faced abuse in their lifetime, this will continue to be our core work.

Virtual counselling was essential for the health and safety of the women in our VAW program during the pandemic. Two years later, with a grant from the Canadian Women's Foundation, our agency began a study to discover the advantages and disadvantages of virtual counselling for almost 50 women in that program. You can read more about the results of this study on page five.

Our Board of Directors continued their outstanding work for another year. With a stable and diversely talented group, we focused on executing our newly minted three-year strategic plan, updating our agency policy manual and continuing with our various committee work. We thank each of our dedicated Board members for another year of sound leadership and many achievements.

Last but not least, we want to thank generous support of our many donors including our ongoing partners like LiUNA Local 183 and LiUNA OPDC, the Canadian Council of Construction Unions, Drywall Acoustic Lathing & Insulating Local 675, Cardinal Funeral Homes, Teixeira Accounting Firm and groups like Lusogolf Fundraising Inc. and Women With Wings.

Finally, thank you to the City of Toronto and our various dedicated volunteers for assisting with our charitable gaming activities at Rama Gaming House Scarborough. We thank all our donors, big or small, for sustaining our agency through challenging times. Your support is always much appreciated!

When life's challenges seem insurmountable, please remember that help is only a phone call away. Abrigo staff members are always ready to assist you in your time of need.

Kind regards,

**Lena Barreto**  
Board Chair

**Ed Graça**  
Executive Director

# Get to Know us Better...

## OUR MOTTO

Connecting People to Possibilities

## OUR MISSION

To build community capacity in west Toronto by helping individuals and families achieve their full potential.

## OUR VISION

To ensure our collaborative efforts result in socially integrated and empowered individuals, families and communities.

## ABRIGO BY THE NUMBERS

### Clients and Volunteers (Fiscal 2022/23)

- **6,345** – Total number of clients served
- **2,914** – Number of clients served by the Community Development and Integration Program (CDIP)
- **3,216** – Number of clients assessed by the Intake Services team
- **2,052** – Number of clients served by the Youth Outreach program
- **502** – Number of clients served by the Violence Against Women program
- **190** – Number of clients served by the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program
- **131** – Number of clients served by the Life and Hope Seniors group
- **106** – Number of clients served by Parenting groups
- **82** – Number of volunteers donating their time to Abrigo
- **11,578** – Number of hours donated by Abrigo's volunteers

## GOALS FOR FISCAL 2023/24

### 1. Expansion of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

**Work** – An experienced group of Abrigo Board of Directors in this area are currently working on the review and updating of our Policy Manual with an EDI, anti-oppressive, trauma informed lens. Abrigo staff members created an EDI working committee last fiscal year to learn, share information and make our physical environment in the office more welcoming to all who visit. Additional workshops facilitated by experts will be presented to staff and the physical changes to the building, i.e., new paint, art work and new furniture will be completed.

### 2. Implementation of Year Two of Abrigo's

**Three-Year Strategic Plan** – Abrigo will prioritize program evaluation led by an experienced leader in the social service and intimate partner violence sector. Emphasis will also be placed on the conclusions of an internal study examining the value of in-person versus virtual counselling for our VAW clients. The review and enhancement of all our current programs and services will continue to meet the changing needs of our communities. A special focus will be placed on staff capacity to accurately capture client data.

**3. Further Refinement of Abrigo Bylaws** – Members of Abrigo's Board of Directors will continue with their thorough and thoughtful review and update of all our agency's bylaws. This work will be completed in advance of our agency's 2024 Annual General Meeting and in compliance with the Ontario Not-For-Profit Corporation Act implementation deadline slated for October 2024.

**4. New and Returning Fundraising Activities** – With the competition for fundraising revenue becoming increasingly challenging, Abrigo will return to holding our annual gala in the 2023/24 fiscal year. In addition, the agency will establish a community Fund Development Council to assist with revenue creation. Abrigo will continue to focus on our ongoing charitable gaming activities that support Abrigo's Seniors and Youth Outreach programming as well as our Community Development and Integration program.

# Client Profile

## A Shared Belief in Compassion and Service

As a Personal Support Worker, Maria Sousa spends her days helping others. She sees life's everyday struggles and the vulnerability that exists in all of us. Maria does her best to assist each of her clients with care and compassion. "I do that because some day, I want someone to take care of me the very same way."

Eight years ago, Maria moved to Canada from Brazil to study English. Shortly after her arrival in Vancouver, she met her soon to be husband, a native Canadian. They had a whirlwind romance, but warning signs soon emerged. Despite this, Maria was in love and decided to get married. It was a small and simple ceremony. Less than 50 days later, her marriage was over.

"He was always challenging and at times disrespectful. He had little to no patience with me. I soon suffered extensive emotional and psychological abuse. It was clear that he wanted to exert power over me, in all aspects of my life," says Maria. "I didn't have a voice in my own home, which was a small basement apartment. I couldn't decorate it the way I wanted. And after we were married, he was always threatening to deport me back to Brazil."

These are common traits among the men who commit gender-based violence or intimate partner violence. Even five years later, although legally separated, he still harasses and chases Maria virtually and continues to find new phone numbers and home addresses.

With no money, no place to live and no job, a friend mentioned Abrigo as a possible lifeline for Maria who was originally only looking for legal advice. "I was actually terrified to go to Abrigo. I didn't know what to expect," she says.

Abrigo Violence Against Women Counsellor Luciana Pache de Faria was assigned to the case and Maria experienced first-hand the care, compassion and

service that she now demonstrates every day at her job.

"Luciana is my angel," says Maria. "She doesn't judge me. She brings me back to reality. Luciana gives me emotional support, strength and guidance. But you as the client have to do your part as well. I can't change him, but I can change myself. You can break the cycle. As Luciana always says 'Your safe harbour is you.'"

With the pandemic still lingering Maria was given the choice of in-person or virtual counselling sessions. "We've learned from the pandemic that the virtual way is easy. but I'm old school, and prefer the personal one-on-one contact, especially when one is vulnerable."

Today, Maria uses the information and tools she learned at Abrigo to be a self-sufficient woman. "I've changed my mindset. I have no need for a man to provide me with things. I have a new place thanks to the help of Abrigo and no one can kick me out. I have a good job I like and I bought a car. I am no longer a victim."

Maria wants to remind all those living with abuse that there is help out there.

**"Abrigo is a 10 out of 10 for me. I'm so grateful that Abrigo staff members helped me get to the place I am today. Believe in yourself, you are stronger than you think. Never give up!"**



# Study Examines In-Person and Virtual Counselling for VAW Clients

## Caring, Safety and the Human Experience

After the initial uncertainty of quickly transitioning to virtual counselling in March 2020, what lingered over the next two years was an ongoing question. Is virtual counselling working well for our clients, particularly those in our Violence Against Women (VAW) program?

“The intricacies of being a survivor of intimate partner violence makes counselling complex,” says Ed Graça, Abrigo’s Executive Director. “For our VAW clients, the virtues of remote versus in-person counselling was difficult to define. The question we all had was, what worked well for our VAW clients, what didn’t, and how many would prefer to go back to in-person sessions?”

With that in mind, Abrigo jumped on a funding opportunity provided by the Canadian Women’s Foundation and secured a grant of \$34,000 to do a study to examine important questions that arose from only offering virtual services.

Abrigo Programs Manager Paula De Jesus was part of a committee assembled to assist with the project. “We decided to take a three-year period from 2019 to 2022, before and through peak COVID, and really examine the virtual counselling question,” says Ms. De Jesus. “We felt that this would provide rich data that would help our drive to improve the client’s counselling experience.”

Abrigo then turned to external consultant Marion Langford to explore the advantages, disadvantages and preferences associated with service modality. Ms. Langford was tasked to structure the client survey, compiled and interpreted the results, and crafted the final report.

### The Study

The core focus of the project was to explore client perceptions and their counselling experiences to help inform post-pandemic service delivery for Abrigo VAW clients.

The decision was made to approach the study in a manner that would amplify the voice of the client by speaking directly with them about their experiences. In total, **49 interviews were conducted** by Abrigo employees who were not VAW program staff.

### Our Findings

The result is a freshly minted study entitled *Choice and Connection VAW Counselling Services, Evaluation of Service Delivery Modalities with Clients Experiencing Domestic Abuse 2019 to 2022*.

Out of the 49 women interviewed, 41 per cent preferred in-person counselling. Only 29 per cent preferred virtual counselling and that same number, 29 per cent, were satisfied with either form of counselling.

#### **Age was not a strong predictor of these numbers.**

In fact, 50 per cent of those under 29 years preferred in-person counselling and for those 50+, it was 71 per cent.

Those who preferred in-person counselling mentioned **better overall connection and communication** with their counsellor as well an **increase in trust** and the **feeling of respect** from the counsellor.

Not surprisingly, those who preferred virtual counselling did so largely because of convenience, i.e., transportation, child care, work schedule.

Interestingly, for those who were happy with either, it was a default position to protect some of the convenience that virtual counselling offers, but the majority made it clear that they prefer in-person counselling.

Overall, the highest characteristic clients looked for in their counsellor was a sense of caring. The other two highest mentioned characteristics were a sense of **feeling safe** and **professionalism**.

### Conclusion

It’s clear that choice is now one of the beneficial legacies of the pandemic. However, in-person VAW counselling offers some benefits that virtual delivery of service cannot fully imitate. The human experience of being together, face-to-face, is fundamentally important to support women who are isolated, afraid and in danger.

## Spring Awakening! Abrigo's Second Floor Renovations

After the long pandemic driven hiatus, Abrigo's Life and Hope seniors' program clients returned in the spring of 2022 for a grand reopening and donor recognition event to celebrate a beautifully renovated second floor and brand-new kitchen.

The second-floor renovation and the installation of a new kitchen was made possible because of the generous financial support of Mr. Manuel DaCosta, owner of Viana Roofing and Sheetmetal Ltd., and the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) respectively.

Mr. DaCosta's extraordinary philanthropic leadership and vision turned outdated space into something special. An old apartment is now our new MDC Media Group Inc. Computer Room, staff office and quiet room. An expanded Multipurpose Room includes within it a lovely mini library.



An OTF grant of \$110,000 allowed Abrigo to completely overhaul the existing space and create a fully functioning kitchen. Together our two donors have created a warm, welcoming and functional environment for our seniors and all the other programs that will use this expanded and redeveloped space.



Among the special guests in attendance for the grand opening ceremony included Davenport MP Julie Dzerowicz and Davenport MPP Marit Stiles who represented the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

For more than a decade, Abrigo's Life and Hope program has acted like a warm embrace for so many seniors in our community. Lead by Coordinator Marilia dos Santos and a group of dedicated volunteers, the program has grown and nurtured a sense of community that never existed before. It brought seniors together, out of isolation, to sing, laugh, learn, experience a meal as one and grasp all the joy that friendships bring.



## DONOR PROFILE

### Russell Alexander Collaborative Family Lawyers Make the Connection

All of us are looking for connections. In the business world, corporations seek out social service agencies to support financially because they share a likeminded objective. The aim is to help move that organization's mandate forward.

For businesses that value work to end gender-based violence and educating young people, Abrigo is a logical choice. Founded in 1998, Russell Alexander Collaborative Family Lawyers saw themselves during the pandemic the increase in clients presenting to their firm with intimate partner violence issues.

"We wanted to branch out and support local agencies with mandates that aligned with our firm's priorities," says Shannon Martell, Russell Alexander's Community Engagement & Events Manager and Assistant General Manager. "Abrigo's focus on helping almost 500 women annually with VAW issues certainly got my attention... I found that Abrigo's approach to working with young people in local schools was amazing as well."

### Volunteers Drive Charitable Gaming Success

The dedicated volunteers who donate their energy to Abrigo's charitable gaming initiative at Rama Gaming House Scarborough are turning time into valuable fundraising dollars for our organization.

"Each month the financial support derived from their efforts helps to pay the rent for our seniors program space on our second floor and it has also led to a significant number of program improvements," says Ed Graça, Abrigo's Executive Director. "Rama funds also help to pay for food for our client's breakfasts and lunches and a new exhaust fan and fire safety system was purchased through c-gaming funds for the stove that cooks our seniors' meals."

Abrigo's 15 charitable gaming volunteers come from all walks of life.



With that information in hand, the Russell Alexander team of 20 lawyers made a generous \$2,500 donation to Abrigo's Violence Against Women (VAW) and Youth Outreach programs.

On a visit to Abrigo, Ms. Martell and other members of her team got a first-hand tour of the agency, met with some of the staff members and counsellors.

"I commend Abrigo for all the work they are doing. It's been an eye-opening experience," says Ms. Martell. "Whether it's challenging VAW cases or educating young men about toxic masculinity and healthy relationships, the work that goes on daily is a difference maker. We are proud to support an agency like Abrigo."

"We have clients, former Abrigo students, Board members, office volunteers, and spouses of staff members on the team as well," says Lena Barreto, Chair of Abrigo's Board of Directors and a Rama volunteer herself.



"The funds we receive from Rama Gaming House make a big difference for our agency and we could not be more thankful for the partnership we have with them."

Thank you to our colleagues at the City of Toronto, the leadership team at Rama Scarborough and the Ontario Charitable Gaming Association (OCGA) for their incredible support!

# Thank You to our Generous Donors!

The generous support of our funders, donors and community partners is the life force that supports our clients and staff members. We appreciate each gift, no matter the size, because every donation is a commitment in the belief of the work we do, each day, to deliver impactful programs and services to the residents of Davenport, the City of Toronto and beyond.

Without our donors' generous support, Abrigo could not make the difference we do for more than 6,000 clients each year. Keeping our donors' trust to deliver program excellence drives each staff member. Their sole focus is to provide the best outcome for each client. That can't be done today without the financial assistance of our many kind donors.

We extend our sincere and most heartfelt thanks to the institutions, corporations, organizations and individuals listed below who supported or donated to Abrigo in the 2022/23 fiscal year.

## Funding Partners

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services  
United Way Greater Toronto  
The Ministry of Attorney General  
City of Toronto – Community Service Partnerships  
City of Toronto – Vaccine Engagement Project  
Employment and Social Development Canada  
Canadian Women's Foundation  
Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto  
Ontario Charitable Gaming Association  
Regiao Autonoma Dos Acores

## Corporate and Community Partners

2065745 Ontario Limited Majestic Renovations  
BMO  
CanadaHelps  
Canadian Council of Construction Unions  
Cardinal Funeral Homes  
Charities Aid Foundation of Canada  
CHUM Charitable Foundation  
Discover Magazine  
Dixon Gordon & Co. LLP

Drywall Acoustic Lathing & Insulation Local 675  
Ferreira Services  
GJF Realty Management Inc.  
Hallmark Housekeeping Services Inc.  
Lancaster Homes  
LH (Niagara) Ltd.  
LiUNA Local 183  
LiUNA Ontario Provincial District Council  
Lusogolf Fundraising Inc.  
Macedo Wine Grape Juice Ltd.  
Mellohawk Logistics.  
Portuguese Canadian Walk of Fame  
Royal LePage Supreme Realty  
Russell Alexander Barrister and Solicitors  
Senso Group Building Supplies Inc.  
Teixeira Accounting Firm  
The Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Women With Wings

## Individuals

Albertina Matos	Jorge Palhao
Americo Lopes	Jose Domingues Milheiro
Arnold Santos	Jose Ernesto Cabral
Brian Rebelo-Furtado	Jose Manuel Simoes
Camila Andrade	Jose Mauca
Carlos Teixeira	Judite Cadete
Carmen Ben	Lena Barreto
Carmina Pereira	Liliana Aguiar
Cidalia Pereira	Manuel J. Clementino
Diana Da Silva	Manuela Marujo
Diogo Peligrinelli Dutra	Maria Cristina Alves
Ed Graça	Maria Melo
Elisio Jordao	Maria Odete Cerqueira
Fernanda Gomes dos Santos	Mark Messih
Francisco Nunes	Monica Da Ponte
Francisco Silva	Odette Medeiros
Francisco Varela	Palmira Da Costa
Gerald Luciano	Paula Ferreira
Gil Amaral	Ricardina Nogueira
Gisel Bettencourt	Rosa Clementino-Dias
Humberto Carolo	Rosa Pereira Lopes
Irene Regalado Graça	Sandra Gamboias
Ivy Baccas	Sharlene Kanhai
Janis Alton	Stephen Fisher
Jennifer Bettencourt	Teresa Pagnotta
Jimmy Ramos	Valeria Sales

*\* If we have inadvertently missed you on this list please accept our apologies and let our office know.*

# The Return and Impact of Abrigo's Dedicated Volunteers

The return of in-house volunteers to the Abrigo Centre was a welcome sight after a long pandemic-related absence. Having our beloved volunteers back, with their endless enthusiasm and dedication, energized our office once again.

Working in a hybrid model for most of the year also allowed specially trained volunteers to assist our clients over the phone from their home as well. This flexibility created a wonderful synergy that allowed all our volunteers to assist clients in a manner that was most comfortable to each volunteer.

With restrictions relaxing and the return to walk-in clients, we happily saw a significant increase in the number of returning volunteers. Whether it was assisting with form-filling, helping our seniors' program members or getting people in the community vaccinated, collectively they were a bright and shining light for all.

Our volunteers' passionate and steadfast commitment to Abrigo was invaluable. Each one deserves special recognition for giving us their most precious resource, the gift of their time.

In fiscal 2022/23 year, **82 devoted volunteers** (both adults and students) generously **gave 11,578 hours** of service to the clients of Abrigo. Thank you to all our volunteers for your invaluable assistance!



Adam Fiore	Laura Fonseca
Aline Ventura	Leila Monteiro
Amanda Terra	Lena Barreto
Amelia Claro	Ligia Sardo
Amelia Moreira	Lily Melo-Graça
Ana Maria Matos	M. Isabel Pereira
Andre Luiz	M. Jesus Machado
Anthony Harker	M. Lourdes de Jesus
Arnon Melo	M. Luz Ferreira
Candida Rodrigues	M. Norberta Oliveira
Carla Neto	M. Silva
Carlos Melo	M. Teresa Moura
Cezarina Chaves	Madison Pavao
Chrystianne De Alburquerque	Mariely R. Marson
Cidalia Pereira	Marlene Araujo
David Pereira	Matthew Correia
Deyan Kostovski	Matthew Graça
Diana Da Silva	Miguel Mendes
Dilsa Andrade	Natalia Medeiros
Elisabete Dias	Natalie Torrado
Erika Pascoal	Odete Melo
Fabiana Camara	Patricia Harper
Fabiano Sales	Paul DeCicco
Fatima da Silva	Paula Martins
Fernanda Gomes	Paulina Onelia
Gila Raposo	Paulo Luis
Helen Do Nascimento	Paulo Pereira
Helia Bites	Pedro Silva
Idalina Marcal	Raquel Mazzeo
Iria Barcelos	Rashida Rosina
Isabelle Pacheco	Regina Jordao
Jessica Lamas	Rosa Machado
Jessica Pacheco	Rosane Fernandes
Joana Nunes	Sergio Sarmiento
Joao Pires	Sofia Valente
Joaquina Vieira	Tania Barbosa
Joel Figueredo	Tania Da Silva
Jorge Palhao	Teresa Pagnotta
Julia Costa	Teresa Soares
Juliane Rodrigues	Urania Silveira
Katia Caramujo	Vanessa Alvim
Lara Carico Santos	Vanessa Ferreira
	Zolane Piedade

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# Abrigo's Board and Staff

## Membership of Abrigo's Board of Directors

April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

Arnon Melo  
Carla Neto  
David Pereira, Vice Chair  
Deyan Kostovski, Secretary  
Gila Raposo  
Leila Monteiro Lins  
Lena Barreto, Chair  
Miguel Mendes  
Teresa Pagnotta

## Abrigo Staff Members

Alyssa Martins  
Ana Machado  
Anderson Salvador  
Cidalia Pereira  
Dazy Pimentel  
Ed Graça  
Erika Pascoal  
Gerald Luciano  
Liliana da Cunha  
Luciana Pache de Faria  
Marília dos Santos  
Marta Santos  
Paula De Jesus  
Rosane Fernandes  
Rui Oliveira  
Teresa Emmanuel  
Valeria Sales



## Our Services

- Community Development & Integration Program
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Government form filling
- Individual Counselling
- Information and Referral Services
- Mindful Fathering Program
- Newcomer Services
- Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program
- Seniors Life and Hope Educational & Recreational Group
- Seniors Helping Seniors
- Success by 6 Parenting Group (for Mothers)
- Violence Against Women Counselling
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Women's Group
- Youth Outreach Services

# ABRIGO CENTRE

## Statement of Operations

For the year ended March 31, 2023

	2023	2022
<b>Revenue</b>		
Funding from government	\$962,371	\$926,913
Fundraising and donations	\$382,911	\$139,161
Contributions from charitable organizations	\$325,016	\$310,206
Fees and other	\$151,759	\$107,686
	<b>\$1,822,057</b>	<b>\$1,483,966</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Salaries	\$1,075,301	\$1,009,063
Employee benefits	\$150,975	\$125,142
Rent	\$189,108	\$136,203
Program delivery	\$80,672	\$28,484
Amortization	\$42,599	\$13,899
Interpretation costs	\$37,042	\$36,520
Office and general	\$29,763	\$7,923
Purchased services	\$21,190	\$22,674
Insurance	\$16,454	\$17,735
Promotion	\$14,793	\$11,773
Repairs and maintenance	\$14,690	\$11,453
Professional fees	\$13,833	\$11,433
Utilities	\$13,180	\$11,020
Information technology	\$8,419	\$8,419
Staff training and travel	\$3,182	\$6,528
Telecommunications	\$4,957	\$6,292
Direct supplies	\$5,946	\$5,986
Donations and fundraising	\$2,601	\$1,642
	<b>\$1,724,705</b>	<b>\$1,472,189</b>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenses</b>	<b>\$97,352</b>	<b>\$11,777</b>

Excerpted from Abrigo Centre's audited financial statements prepared by Dixon, Gordon & Co. LLP, Chartered Accountants with the Auditor's Report approved by the Board on July 5, 2023.

Full audited financial statements available upon request.

# Whether its In-Person, Virtual or Telephone... we've got you covered.

Delivering service in the way it works best for you is critical to your success and ours.

Every day Abrigo counsellors help clients find solutions to their issues and concerns. No one is turned away and no issue is too small.

Please support our clients and the caring and dedicated team that supports them. Take a moment and give today. It's easy, fast and secure.

Visit us at [www.abrigo.ca](http://www.abrigo.ca).



## Abrigo Centre

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Facebook & Instagram:  
/abrigocentre

Charitable Number  
129515284 RR0001

