



**Autism
Services**
of Saskatoon

Annual Report 2014/15

Vision Statement

THAT ALL INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY AND TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Mission Statement

Autism Services continuously strives to deliver the highest standard of support, advocacy, and service to individuals with autism, and their



Message from the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board

Perhaps an Annual Report can best be summed up as "the story of a year in the life" of an organization. This is the story of Autism Services of Saskatoon for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

A powerful story resonates with us, maybe even touches us at soul level. It is simple and yet it stirs our emotions, speaks to our passions, captures our imagination. It links us to the "Why" we are here; doing whatever it is we do as an employee, a volunteer, a funder, a parent, an individual. Some of the characters in this story fill all those roles, all at once.....often requiring juggling expertise and always...tremendous fortitude.

We're all here, the characters in this story, because we feel a very personal stake in the attainment of Autism Services' Vision..."That all individuals with autism have the opportunity to live with dignity and to reach their full potential."

We're here because this quest speaks to our desire to be involved in making a meaningful contribution with our lives. Not merely "providing a service"; rather being involved in transforming lives and communities for people impacted by ASD.

Sometimes we are rewarded with such success it makes our knees weak..."he smiled "at me""; "she asked for what she wanted...unprompted"; "we went out and the sitter had no problems"; "a classmate invited him to the birthday party!"

"We got the grant"; "the donor loves what we're doing"; "that new contract covers everything"; "these new group homes are such a blessing!" It's so easy to celebrate when things go right. Indeed, some would say that's all that should be included in the Annual Report story.

And yet, too often we face set-backs and it seems like there will never be progress. What the child or young adult did just yesterday can't be replicated today. “What, another meltdown? Are we starting back at square one?” There are so many, many referrals; never-ending requests; so much unmet need; not enough resources and the waiting lists continue to grow. We must guard against growing cranky with one another as the pressures mount.

We know there is more we can do to make a difference; to be a part of sustained transformation in people's lives. Sometimes we just want to stand atop the highest hill and shout out...”Please help us...help everyone who needs us.”

Sometimes, we can't help but wonder if our lovely new Service Center, the anchor for a long-held dream to enhance the service experience for individuals and families, runs the danger of being more of a hindrance than a help. “It's so nice...Wow...they must have all the resources they need.”

Yes...it is wonderful and our clients deserve to be served in a top-notch facility. And yet...it is not fully funded. Nor is it completely outfitted. While we were delighted to move into this fantastic new home in July, 2014; one of the challenges remains finding those unique donors whose giving goals align with supporting “bricks and mortar”. We know they are out there and we are committed to finding them. As we do, we know we can demonstrate the value of supporting this critical aspect of our work.

We came across a quote recently that read, “Nobody changes in a significant way except through extreme circumstances.”

No doubt this holds true for organizations as well. 2014-15 certainly saw an exceptional amount of change – some might even say “extreme”. Not just in our physical location; with a new service center and two new group homes, but also so in respect of the “cast of characters” that lead the organization.

This past year saw 3 Board Chairs, 2 new Executive Directors and changes in 3 senior staff Director positions. During the year or just prior to, key contact people within our two major government funders also changed. Not to mention the need for a whole new financial software package right as one year ended and this one began.

As new players learned the ropes and how to work together in this evolving environment; the glue that held it all together was a belief in the Mission, the importance placed on relationships and the caliber of leadership demonstrated at all levels.

Recently, senior leadership on the staff side participated in an exercise that asked them to define what leadership meant to them. The responses were heart-felt, open, sincere and incredibly inspiring.

All spoke to passion for and belief in the Vision and Mission – of the desire to be agents of positive change. Their submissions highlighted the importance of listening, principles, ethics, integrity, possessing a moral compass, mentorship and coaching for growth, respect, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, the value of making, owning up to and learning from mistakes, being proactive, openness to change, self-aware and self-care, humility, teamwork, harmony (internal and external), walking the walk, support for the organization, being invested, enthusiastic, keeping a positive attitude, demonstrating empathy, generosity, emotional stability.

Our staff and volunteers at all levels embody these same values and this bodes well for the future of the organization. People respect and practice the value of working together, supporting one another, encouraging, challenging and celebrating; themselves, one another and all the people and collateral organizations our paths intersect with. In this way, we all contribute to building an organization strong enough to withstand any challenge and to succeed beyond the wildest dreams. Each one of our clients and families deserve this.

This story would not be possible if not for the trust, confidence and generosity of our major government funders - the Ministries of Health and Social Services; the Saskatoon United Way; grants from organizations such as: The Saskatoon Community Foundation, the City of Saskatoon, the Community Initiatives Fund and of course, our many corporate and individual donors.

We are honoured to be leading this exemplary organization and it is with deep appreciation for the efforts of the many – past and present - that we share with you the story of Autism Services for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

With Deepest Respect,

Daniel du Chalard

Board Chair

Lynn Latta

Executive Director

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Chapter I The Service Story

ABA- Little Tots

- Currently in its’ third year of operation, the program was able to join the rest of the “AS family” under the same roof when we moved into the new service center in July.
- From April ’14 to August ’14 the program served 12 children between 2-6 years old. After 4 “graduated” to Kindergarten, 8 children participated for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- Originally developed and offered as a pilot program, the model is based on the most extensively researched, evidence-supported approach to the treatment of children with autism – Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI), which is based on the science of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA).
- EIBI targets the 3 core deficits of ASD – impairments in social interactions, communication, restricted and repetitive behaviours.
- The program combines 20 hours of center-based, one-on-one therapy with 5 hours of parent led therapy weekly. Parent training and coaching is an integral component, as parents and therapists work together to help the children succeed.
- We extend a heart-felt “Thank You” to Dr. Sylvie Donais of Montreal for her clinical oversight and training during the Director’s leave beginning in November ’14.
- What parents say about the program:
 - “Some gifts are so good, they need to be shared. It is my hope that more and more children and parents will be blessed by the ABA Little Tots Program in years to come.”
 - “This program is, without question, the key to helping children with ASD succeed in achieving their full potential.”

Fantastic News: Good-Bye Pilot Status - new annualized funding in the March, 2015 Saskatchewan Government Budget!!

Autism Intervention Program (AIP)

- At any given time, there are 240+ children/families active on service caseloads, with an average of 11 new referrals monthly. Each family is offered a face-to-face intake session where initial goals are identified.
- Client numbers have outpaced existing service capacity resulting in a lengthy waiting list for individual service plans to be developed and intervention initiated. In the interim, a number of innovative and highly valued group support and/or training programs are offered to children and/or parents.
- We are working closely with our funder, the Saskatoon Health Region, looking at ways to streamline and to capture outcomes, which will assist in demonstrating the need for additional resources.
- Mid-year, a half-time Autism Consultant position was designated to serve the eastern portion of the Health Region – providing a more consistent service to families in that area.
- We contract with two Northern Health Regions to supply a .5 Autism Consultant to each. They travel up North monthly seeing clients, working with families and providing training and support to local resources.
- The range of services provided was enhanced this year with the addition of a Social Worker and an SLP to the team. Families benefited immensely from such supports as assistance to access funding through such mechanisms as the Cognitive Disability Strategy, being matched with a mentor, learning about and/or being referred to other services and supports to meet their unique and often complex needs.
- Unfortunately the SLP position became vacant in the summer of 2014 and recruitment proved very challenging. The position was still vacant at the end of the fiscal year. (But...a sneak-peak into the next fiscal year shows a new SLP starting in the middle of June 2015. Yay!)
- In March 2015, the Director of AIP, Mrs. Garnett Francis, resigned from Autism Services. She had played an integral role in the organization for many years and is wished the very best.
- While every child and every family situation is unique, the following story, told from the perspective of an Autism Consultant, highlights the “Why” that drives the passion and engagement of our staff:

Robert is four years old, brilliant and energetic. When I arrive he is jumping on the couch, clicking his tongue, insisting on holding two items in his hands at all times. His parents tell me he cannot communicate, does not listen to instruction, and does not play with toys functionally. He also bites his clothing and hits others. The parents begin crying, asking what they need to do to help their son.

Parenting a child with ASD is not easy and they have taken an important step in seeking support. They feel so unsure, as it seems nothing they have tried has worked. Yet, I assure them, they are the ones who know their child best. We will work together as a team, using principles of ABA and soon I introduce the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). Within weeks, mom is teaching Robert PECS level 1 and within a few months, he is asking for things...popcorn, juice, water and more.

An autism support worker is introduced and although it takes some time to gain Robert's trust, with him screaming for many hours during sessions, the worker doesn't give up. Soon they have a "trade" system so he will take turns with a variety of toys. This worker also helps mom with PECS and helps Robert learn how to listen to instructions. The implementation of a play program helps to decrease his stimming behaviour.

By the six month mark, Robert has learned how to listen to instructions and will sit down at the table. He has learned screaming won't work to get what he wants; but asking for things with his PECS binder may. He's doing better at school and in his other therapy sessions. His parents feel he has made tremendous gains and while they know there is long way to go; they are now hopeful and can see the value of sticking with the journey.

This is what make this work so important to our staff...what matters to them is seeing families like Robert's achieve outcomes they once thought impossible.

Family and Group Programs

- This is the umbrella for between 20-30 distinct social, recreational and support programs that run year-round. While admission fees are charged for each program, sponsorships are available if this is a barrier to participation. 129 spots were sponsored at a cost of \$18,435 in this fiscal year.
- Too often, people with ASD are excluded from mainstream activities because of the level of support (often 1 on 1) needed for them to participate successfully. Many parents tell us if it were not for our programs, their children would not be involved anywhere.
- Annual Summer Camps run for 7 weeks and serve over 80 individuals throughout the summer. There are 3 separate day camps and each camp is grouped according to age and client needs. Activities are endless! Pike Lake/Blackstrap day trips, BBQs, gym blast, bowling, mini-golf, Forestry Farm, therapeutic horseback riding... Plenty of sunshine and plenty of laughs.
- Over a summer, we have 2 supervisors and about 30 staff to ensure a safe, fun, positive and inclusive environment. Over a year, that number is more than 120 part-time/casual. All programs utilize volunteers, many of whom go on to seek employment with us as they want to be part of this organization.
- During the other seasons, sessions include Social Groups (Adult Club, Teen Club, Young Teen Club, Circle of Friends), aquatics, strength training, Fun in the Gym, bowling, art and music therapy and much more.
- A heart-warming story occurred at one of our Teen Club nights: We had gone to Fudd's for supper before going to Ruckers. While we were getting settled at the table, a man asked what organization we were from. When told who we were and what we do, etc. he shook the Coordinator's hand and explained his son has Autism and how much he would enjoy a program like this. He lives in Calgary, so unfortunately will not be joining us on any outings. However, after much praise for what we were doing, the man left and soon returned with two giant bags of cookies from the Fudd's bakery. "A little something to show my appreciation." We gave him a huge Thank You!

Day Program

- During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the Day Program experienced tremendous growth. We went from dreaming of someday having a day program for people with autism, to running a community based day program that supports 6 individuals, and continues to make plans to expand!
- We started supporting one young man in July of 2014, and began working with more individuals over the next few months. Many of the individuals we support are participating in a day program for the first time, and they are excited to have the opportunity to meet new people, and participate in a variety of work and skill-building based activities.
- Programs are developed to meet the unique needs and preferences of the individuals as much as possible. Sometimes it's necessary for 2 participants to share one support staff and they learn about compromise and experience the value of trying something different.
- Having space in the new building for individuals to use has been wonderful. We are looking forward to beginning to work with more new clients over the next year, and to continue to grow our services and program.
- An example of an exceedingly valuable work placement is the cleaning of toys used in therapy and play in our various programs. Two participants come in regularly and do a marvelous job with this endeavor.

Residential Program

- This past year saw exceptional growth and transition with the completion and opening of two new group homes, side-by-side in the Evergreen neighbourhood; bringing the total number of homes to 5.
- With this increase and with the admission of a new resident to an existing home, we are now supporting 21 (up from 13) adults in combinations of group homes, supported living apartment and a new pilot Self-Directed Funding arrangement.
- For many of our new residents, the move to a group home was a significant milestone in their life journey. For people living with ASD, this type of change can be very unsettling and the transitions were made slowly and at a pace that they could get comfortable with.
- For some of the families, this was the first time the young adult had lived away from their parents and the parents had huge adjustments to make also. We are honoured by the trust they are demonstrating in us.
- Two of our new residents made the move to a community based home after spending many years in institutional settings. We are very pleased to see them adjusting and enjoying many aspects of life in their new homes.
- Ensuring our homes are staffed appropriately is an ongoing priority. New staff undergo through a rigorous screening and interview process, followed by an intensive training protocol.
- Group Home Managers have taken all the basic training, and continue to work through the CLSD Levels of training.

Centralized Services Team (CST)

CST Overview - Clients Seen

April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015

Total # Clients Seen	62
Total Diagnostic Referrals	49
ASD Diagnosis Confirmed	19
Total Consultative Referrals	13
Male/Female Clients	53/9
Youngest Client Seen	2 yrs 4 mos
Oldest Client Seen	18 yrs, 11 mos
Average Age	9 yrs
By Health Region (Monthly Appointments)	
HRHA (Heartland)	11
KTHR (Kelsey Trail)	11
PAPHR (Prince Albert)	10
PNHRA (Prairie North)	9
By Health Region (Traveling Clinics)	
AHA (Athabasca)	11
KYHRA (Keewatin-Yatthe)	12
MCCRHA (Mamawetan) ** Distance consults, no assessments	0 (4)

This team of professionals includes a pediatrician, a child psychologist, an occupational therapist and a speech language pathologist; contracted and coordinated through Autism Services to provide diagnostic and consultative services to seven health regions in central and northern Saskatchewan.

Chapter II The Advocacy Story

The need for advocacy and for working together to change government policy and get increased resources directed to supporting children, families and adults living with Autism Spectrum Disorders remains a key priority for Autism Services of Saskatoon.

As a non-profit, charitable organization, Autism Services must be careful and cautious in how it pursues an advocacy agenda for a number of reasons. Two key points being:

- Revenue Canada has strict guidelines that must be adhered to in respect to dealing with donor funds and charitable vs advocacy activities; and secondly,
- we get the majority of our revenue from Ministries of the Government of Saskatchewan, and the relationships we have with elected officials and our contacts in the Ministries is one based on mutual support, respect, cooperation and collaboration.

While staff practice advocacy daily on a case-by-case basis, over the past year, there were two formal advocacy initiatives underway, each very different from the other. One resulted in a very positive outcome, with the announcement in March, that new annualized funding was being designated to the ABA-Little Tots program.

From the outset, it was agreed the campaign would be one of collaboration and positive focused. It was very much parent-led – writing letters, making phone calls, meeting with MLAs, organizing a petition that saw over 3,600 signatures in support of the request being tabled in the Legislature. Autism Services wrote letters to the Premier and the Minister of Health and met with key contacts in the Ministry of Health and the Saskatoon Health Region. Together, success was achieved.

The second initiative is a story of divergent paths. Early in 2014, Autism Services was approached about the formation of a new advocacy initiative with the goal of drawing parents together to provide feedback on how we could make best use of limited resources and outline areas that should be pursued with the government.

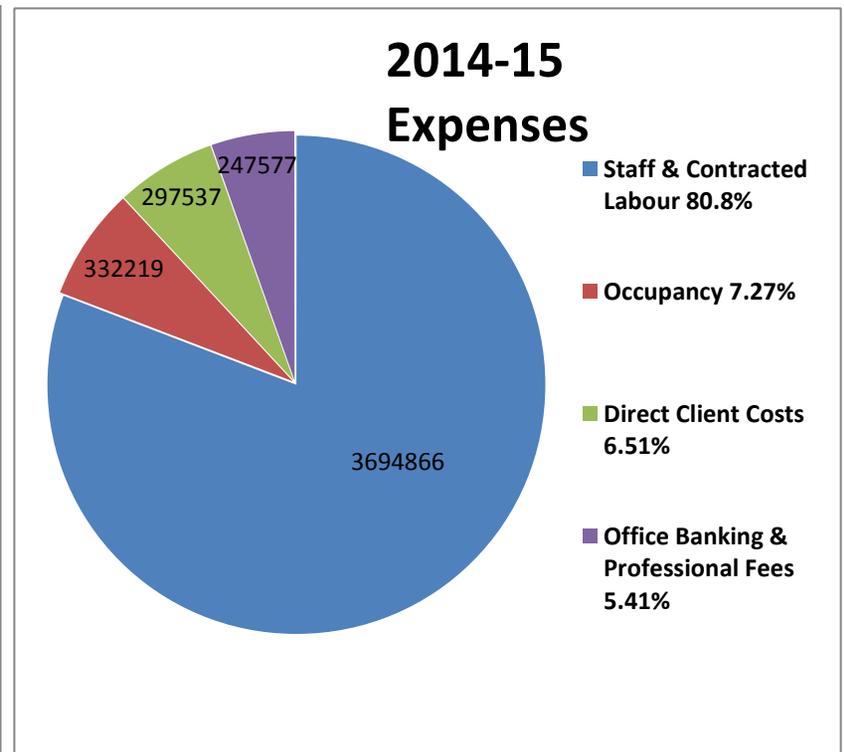
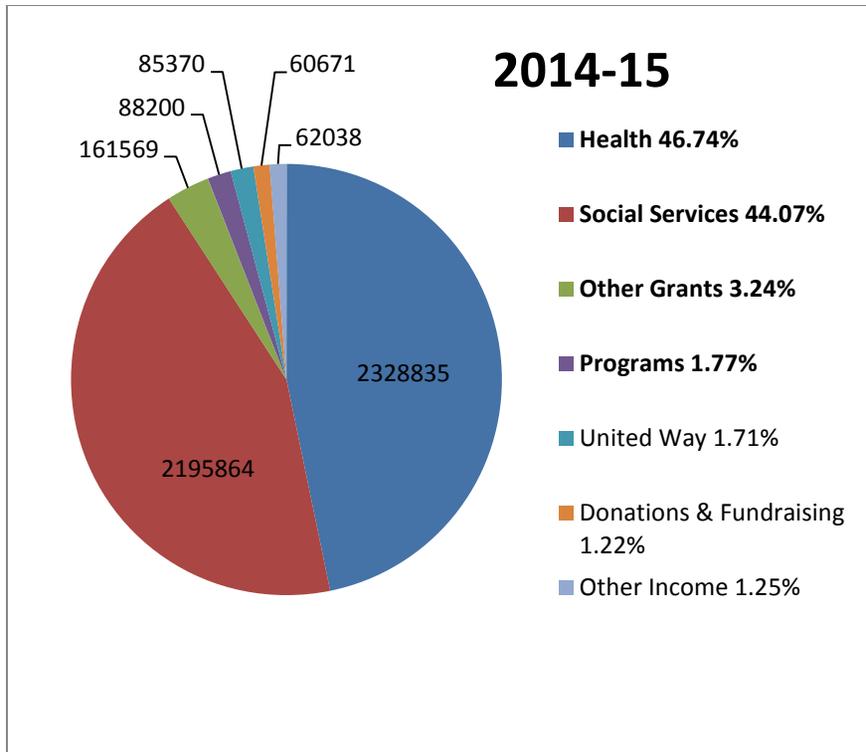
Over the next few months the group evolved, forming a new independent organization, which decided to pursue an advocacy campaign focused on only one stated priority and to be actively involved in their own separate fundraising.

Feedback we received from some parents was that this particular initiative was not their key priority. Also we had and heard, some concerns about the messaging and tone in some of the letters being written to government. Ultimately, it was decided we would not formally align with the group.

Many of the members and supporters in the new organization are also members and clients at Autism Services and our goal is to maintain a respectful and courteous relationship. We support the right of parents and concerned others to pursue whatever initiatives they feel are in the best interest of their children and wish them success with their undertaking.

Chapter III The Funding Story

- Historically, the majority of Autism Services’ funding comes from the Government of Saskatchewan through the Ministries of Health (via the Saskatoon Health Region); and Social Services (via Community Living Services Division and Saskatchewan Housing. 2014-15 was no different – with 90.81% of revenue from those sources.
- An additional significant revenue source is the Saskatoon and Area United Way. They are undertaking a major change in how they allocate dollars and we will know by the end of June, 2015 if this will continue to be a source of revenue for AS.
- We continue to apply for grants and this past year saw dollars coming from the Saskatoon Community Foundation, Community Initiatives, City of Saskatoon and student Summer Works programs (fed/prov)
- Donations and Fundraising have been identified as having significant potential for growth and the Board endorsed an initiative to build capacity in this critical area. Contracting with Philanthropy Coach and Counsel was the first step taken to ensure a solid foundation and growth plan for the next 3-5 years.
- Interviews with key donors and community leaders will provide the information needed to target appropriate asks as we develop individual and corporate donor platforms.
- 100% Board participation to annual giving demonstrated their commitment and set a benchmark for reaching out to the community.
- An account was set up with RBC Dominion Securities to facilitate acceptance of donations of stocks/shares.
- Key fundraising events were: Gatsby Casino Evening in April, Golf Tournament in August, Premiere Festival in September.
- We extend the deepest gratitude to each of our donors, sponsors and volunteers for their generous and much needed support for our Vision and Mission.



Chapter IV The Human Resource Story

Board of Directors:

Chair – Daniel Du Chalard

V-Chair – Dr. Tim Greenough

Treasurer – Kyle Sibley

Jennifer Harland

Candace Wilson

Brad Mitchell

Dr. Erik Pausjensen

Heather MacMillan-Brown

Justin McGhee

Jennifer Mathews

Leland Kreklewich

David Billy*

Brenda Yuzdepski*

Cheryl Lenz-Fabian*

Sheila Buller*

**Resigned during year*

Leadership/Management Staff

Executive Director – Lynn Latta

Director of Finance – Shirley Kloeble

Director of ABA – Sunbul Rai (Team Lead – Jodi Brown)

Director of AIP – Garnett Francis* (Senior Consultant – Amanda Day)

Director of Family Programs – Alex Scott (Coordinator – Megan Radu)

Director of Residential Programs – Glenda Kpelly

Manager Day Program – Caitlin Stickney

Residential Managers: Jenny Besenski

Jenna Obleman

Melissa Boutilier

Ryan Davidson

Ryan Cupid

Office Manager – Sharon Schneider

Fundraising Events – Carol Tebay

Each of these leaders are blessed to lead teams of dedicated and committed people, without whose passions and skills, the landscape for the treatment, care and quality of life for people impacted by ASD would be a much bleaker place.

CST – Dr. Karen Streilein, Pediatrician; Dr. Deb Hay, Psychologist; David Ambrose, Occupational Therapist; Kathy Jo Simmie, Speech Therapist