

A teal background featuring a close-up photograph of several hands clasped together in a supportive grip. At the top center, there is a vertical white line with three colored dots (light blue, yellow, and orange) below it.

amplifying the family voice



ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19



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Message from our President and Executive Director



It's been almost twenty years since PLEO's founding mothers sought out to change the way families experience and navigate mental health challenges.

Since then PLEO has positively impacted thousands of families, and helped drive the evolution of parents and caregivers from outsiders in the mental health system to partners. After several years of rapid growth, we took a (brief) moment this year to reflect on our past two decades of work, the voices of the families we serve, and our next steps. Our vision is clear: we believe that *families facing mental health challenges can flourish, stigma-free, with the support and services they need*. We know it is possible, and that our work – fostering positive outcomes for families by providing Family Peer Support and by amplifying the family voice – is bringing us closer to that vision. We are helping these families find their way forward.

We are buoyed by the recognition of the family experience, and the commitment we are seeing in our community and throughout the province on family partnership to improve access, process, and outcomes. While there is still much to be done, we must acknowledge this stark contrast to PLEO's early days – we have been heard! PLEO and parents are partners in the important changes underway in our provincial and regional health systems. We are optimistic that there is a real opportunity to get it right for children, youth, and their families, and we are leaning on our strengths to ensure this opportunity is not lost.

As with past years, our outcomes were excellent with more than 90% of parents reporting that as a result of our services they are better able to cope, better able to support their child, and better able to access the services they need. They also report feeling less anxious, stressed, and isolated. In continuing to refine our services and strengthen our partnerships, we established on-site presence at several locations throughout the region, and

a new pathway to our services through direct referrals from service providers. We've seen growth in demand for our services, with a 46% increase in unique families served over last year; and recognition of our unique model through new research partnerships and interest in bringing the lessons we have learned beyond our regional borders. We were also honoured to receive The Royal's Inspiration Award for Community Leader in Mental Health.

These successes are the result of an incredible team of Family Peer Supporters whose lived experience, compassion, and connection to the families we serve keep us grounded in both urgency and hope. Our Board of Directors provides the direction and oversight to keep us moving forward. Our partners, on the front-lines of health and education, and in government, have helped expand our reach and our ability to support families when and where they need it. Our funders have recognized and supported the need and our ability to deliver and without them, none of this would be possible.

We are grateful.

Elyse Schipper, Executive Director

Phyllis Grant-Parker, President & Chair



Who we are

PLEO – Parents’ Lifeline is an incorporated non-profit family peer support organization for parents whose children to age 25 are facing mental health challenges. We are staffed with parents who have supported their own children with these challenges – we have travelled the journey.

Our proven model of family peer support is unique within Ontario. Our integrated services include a parents’ helpline providing support and guidance in navigating a fragmented mental health system; facilitated parent support groups where families can share information and learn from one another, and more intensive one-on-one family peer support.

In addition to working directly with families, we champion positive system change to create a more effective, family focused approach to mental health care. Through collaboration with service providers and key stakeholders, we ensure that the real needs of the thousands of families we support are understood.

We know first-hand that parents play a significant role in their child’s outcomes and research supports this. We recognize that parents can’t do it alone. We understand the challenges and the stressors on families and we believe that recovery is possible. Hope over despair.

Our Vision is that families facing mental health challenges can flourish, stigma-free, with the support and services they need.

Our Mission is to foster positive outcomes for families with children to age 25 facing mental health challenges by providing family peer support and by amplifying the family voice for system change.

Our Core Values

- We have a sincere and compassionate interest in the well-being of those we serve and we value the dignity of all families dealing with mental health challenges
- We believe in hope, inclusion, recovery and the capacity of families to provide support and advocacy for their children when supported
- We believe trust, respect, honesty and fairness are the foundations for all relationships
- We value equity and diversity in our community
- We value excellence and meeting the highest standards of professionalism
- We believe in continuous improvement with a bias to action

Our Strengths

Experience. We have been supporting families for almost 20 years. That, combined with our own lived experience, provides us with an in-depth understanding of the fundamentals of effective family peer support.

Proven Record: Results from ongoing evaluation consistently show that our model is working, and that we are making a positive impact.

Bilingual Services: All of our services are available in both English and French.

Scope: We support parents of children to age 25 to include transitional aged youth, clients identified as suffering from a gap in services elsewhere in the system.

Integrated Approach: Our model allows for parents and caregivers to access our services when, where, and how they need us. Together, they provide a comprehensive approach that can respond to a family’s individual and changing needs.

Real-time, on-the-ground data: Our customized database and surveys capture in detail the experience of thousands of families, providing invaluable insight into real needs and journeys – the collective ‘Family Voice.’

Strong collaborative partnerships: We work closely with service providers, system leaders, and researchers to exchange knowledge and support efforts towards more effective care.

Our bias to action: We respond to the urgency for change.

Board of Directors



Phyllis Grant-Parker
President & Chair



Denise Gilby
Vice-Chair



Tara Draper
Treasurer



Margaret DeCorte
Director



Noah Spector
Director



Michelle Neville
Director



**Tanya Parker
Wallace** Director



Karen Magalhaes
Director



David Millen
Director

How we Help

We help parents of children facing mental health challenges find their way forward.

The Parents we Support

The parents we support have children, youth, or young adults up to age 25 who are struggling with their mental health. The range of challenges is broad – ADHD, addiction, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, autism as there is often overlap or dual diagnosis, eating disorders, and many others. Their child may or may not have a diagnosis, and can be at any stage of their journey.

We know that the challenges these parents face are significant – from our own experience as parents, our work within the mental health system, and directly from parents themselves through our ongoing Family Experience Survey.

In 2018-19 the percentage of parent respondents who described the following as extremely or very challenging were:

73% : finding mental health / addiction services for their child

72% : being on wait-lists for services

75% : getting the right educational supports

60% : being involved as much as they would like in their child's treatment

67% : having other people understand their situation

60% : having other people understand their child's situation

64% : supporting other family members

67% : financial pressures associated with their child's situation

72% : stigma and judgement from others

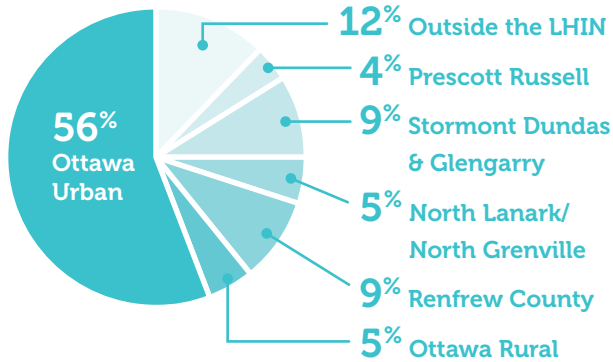
73% : being able to cope and care for themselves

90% : worrying about the future

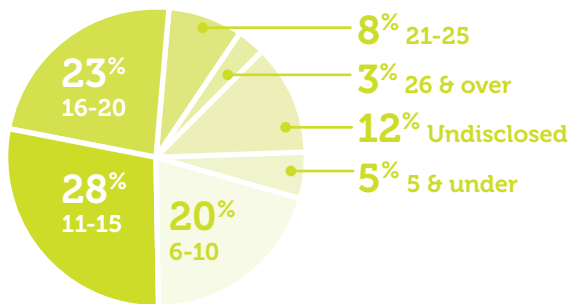
77% : managing crisis situations

Families Served

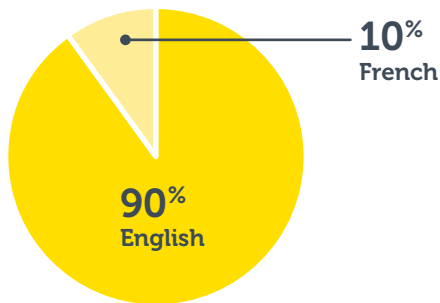
BY REGION



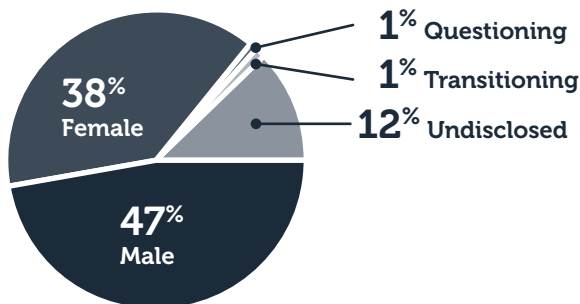
BY AGE GROUP



LANGUAGE PREFERENCE



BY CHILD OR YOUTH'S GENDER



Our Services

We provide Family Peer Support through integrated services specifically designed to support parents when, where, and how they need it, and to work together so that parents can move seamlessly between them.

Thanks to the support of our funders, all of our services are available at no cost. Parents do not need a referral to access our services. New this year, we are able to welcome referrals from providers working with a family so that we can make that first call. In 2018-19 we received 264 referrals from hospital emergency departments, schools, family physicians, mental health treatment centres, walk-in clinics, and community health centres.

We help parents find and access the right services for their child and family. We help them build their own capacity to support their child, and to cope with the tremendous challenges they face. We work together to figure out how to manage confidentiality, co-parenting, setting boundaries, school truancy, medication, safety, housing, lack of motivation or insight, and all the other issues and stressors that the whole family faces when a child is struggling. And we're here alongside them as peers – as parents who have been there ourselves and really get it – so that they never have to feel alone or isolated.

Our **Parents' Helpline** is answered Monday to Friday from 9am to 7pm. Any parent or caregiver of a child up to age 25 can call – any time and as often as is helpful. There's no waitlist, no fee, no paperwork. You call and get support right away.

2018-19 BY THE NUMBERS:

510 Unique families served through our **Parents' Helpline**

338 of these families supported multiple times throughout the year



PLEO makes a real difference in the lives of families (and health professionals and researchers) through their direct support of parents and youth for over 15 years, and is well established as an integral and vital member of the mental health services community in Ottawa. I don't know who I'd recommend to parents and families if PLEO didn't exist!"

Our **Parent Support Groups** are confidential, no judgement, small groups of parents who meet once a month to support each other, share valuable information, and connect with a community. These are hosted by two Family Peer Supporters who bring their own experience, wisdom and knowledge of the services and resources available in the community. All groups are drop-in with no registration required.

2018-19 BY THE NUMBERS:

201 Parents Support Groups

at 18 locations throughout the region

533 parents and caregivers participated

Our **One-on-One Mobile Service** is for parents who, for whatever reason, would benefit from more intensive support and guidance. Our Family Peer Supporters meet with parents in their community, one-on-one, usually over about 8 weeks.

2018-19 BY THE NUMBERS:

Provided **One-on-One Support** to

151 families

New this year, we are also **on-site** at several locations across the region, working closely with our partners to ensure the whole family is supported. 6 Location were added this year, with more scheduled for Fall 2019 in Ottawa, Kemptville, Hawkesbury, and Rockland.

2018-19 LOCATIONS:

Pembroke - The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families

Cornwall - The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Cornwall - Équipe psycho-sociale

Carleton Place - Open Doors For Lanark Children & Youth

Perth - Open Doors For Lanark Children & Youth

Smith Falls - Open Doors For Lanark Children & Youth

Throughout the year you can find us participating in **community events** where parents are, or speaking to parents and service providers on topics such as family peer support, attachment, and how to help a loved one struggling with mental health challenges. We also provide a monthly newsletter with the information our Family Peer Supporters are most excited about. Our goal, as with our other services, is for participants and readers to leave better informed and equipped.

2018-19 BY THE NUMBERS:

Participated in **75 events**

Meaningful contact with **1259 attendees**

1701 newsletter subscribers

Impact & Highlights

Through anonymous surveys we check in with the parents we have served to ensure we are fulfilling our mission. We learn from parents about what their needs are, and how we can best support them and refine our services. Consistent with previous years, this year's results show that more than 90% of parents and caregivers who have used our services report feeling better able to cope, better able to support their child, and better able to access the services they need. They also report feeling less anxious, stressed, and isolated.

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of our services, we challenge ourselves to continuously evaluate how parents access them. This year, our partners were champions for parents and for PLEO in helping to ensure that information and Family Peer Support is available to parents when, where, and how they need it. These were some of the highlights:

- Ongoing collaboration with CHEO to develop information resources for parents on topics such as technology and problematic video gaming, depression, and physical activity and mental health
- Partnership with Sandy Hill Community Health Centre and Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre to deliver a SMART Recovery for Family & Friends Group
- Partnership with Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre in their Collaborative Problem Solving educational groups for parents
- Partnership with Ottawa Public Health in addressing barriers to parents receiving information, including co-facilitation of a parent focus group
- Partnerships with Open Doors for Lanark Children & Youth, The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families, The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Cornwall), and Equipe-Psycho-Sociale to bring Family Peer Support on-site to their locations at critical hours
- Collaboration on CHEO's TIMELY research initiative, resulting in direct referrals to PLEO for families presenting to hospital emergency departments across the region
- Collaboration on a University of Calgary research initiative to mobilize international evidence on peer support and family peer support
- New relationship with CMHA Calgary to share best practices and the PLEO model of Family Peer Support
- Participation in the Minister of Health and Long-term Care's Roundtable on mental health and addictions system transformation strategy
- Partnership in the development of three Ontario Health Teams: To be named by kids OHT, North Rideau Health Alliance, and Prescott-Russell Health Team



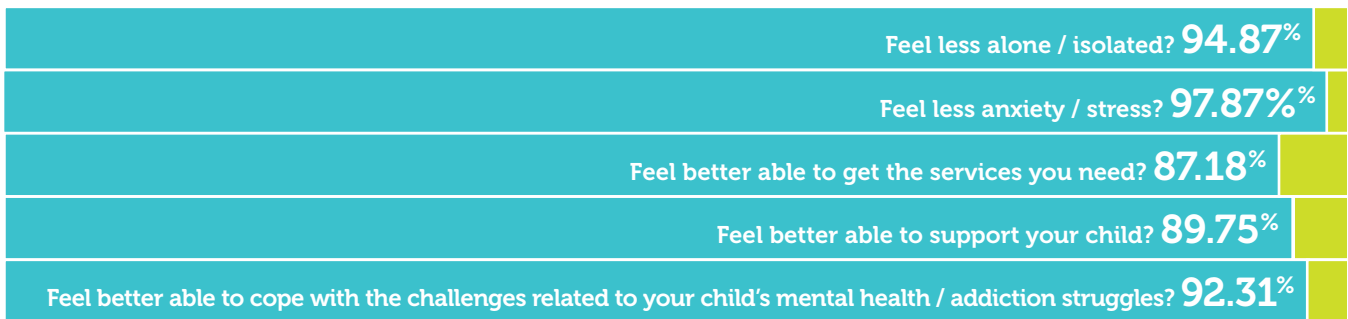
The work you do is soooo valuable and much needed. You are the link to wellness and hope. Keep up the excellent work you do and PLEASE keep growing! I appreciate you a lot!"



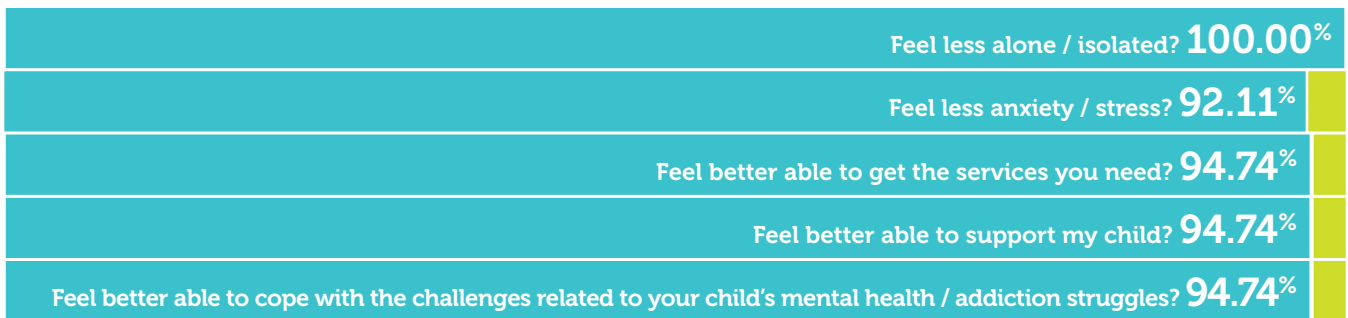


I expected a simple exchange of information, but instead got the assistance of a very empathetic, experienced person, who went far beyond pointing me to possible services. I was very touched by the person's warmth and support."

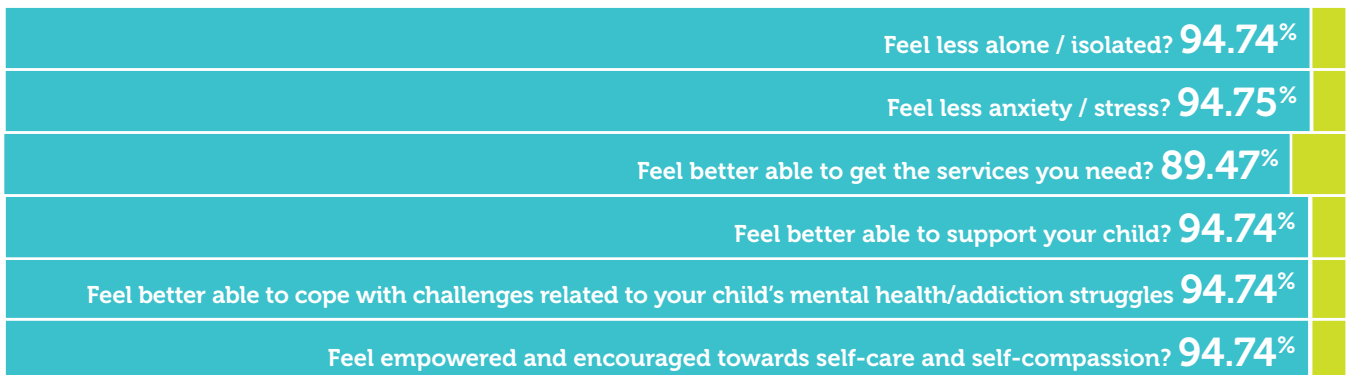
Calling the PLEO helpline has helped me to...



Attending a PLEO support group has helped me to...



Working one-on-one with a PLEO peer supporter has helped me to...



Extremely, very, moderately or slightly helpful

Not at all helpful



The Region we Serve



The support I receive always helps me to see things with a different perspective. I feel listened to and accompanied in my path to help my loved one."

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2018/19

Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario

Summary of Program Revenue and Program Expenditures

For the 12 months ended March 31, 2019

TOTAL REVENUE **\$ 707,931**

Champlain LHIN **\$ 358,811**

Ontario Trillium Foundation **\$ 235,183**

United Way **\$ 64,182**

Donations & Fundraising **\$ 25,080**

Miscellaneous **\$ 14,257**

Ottawa Public Health **\$ 10,418**

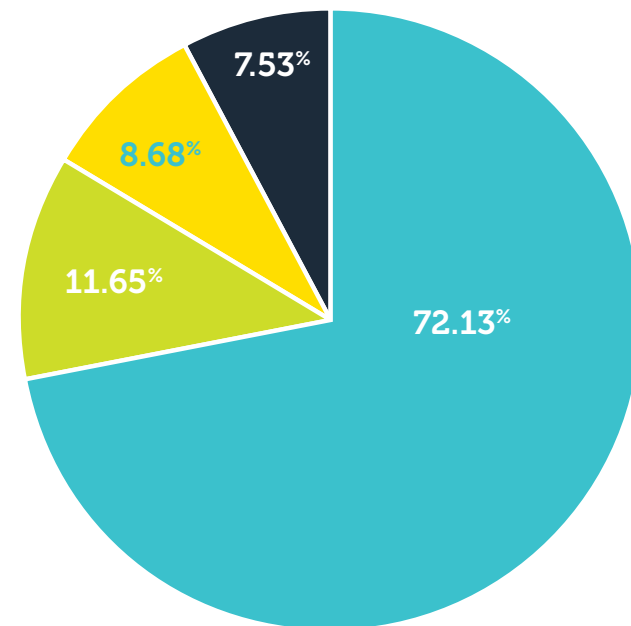
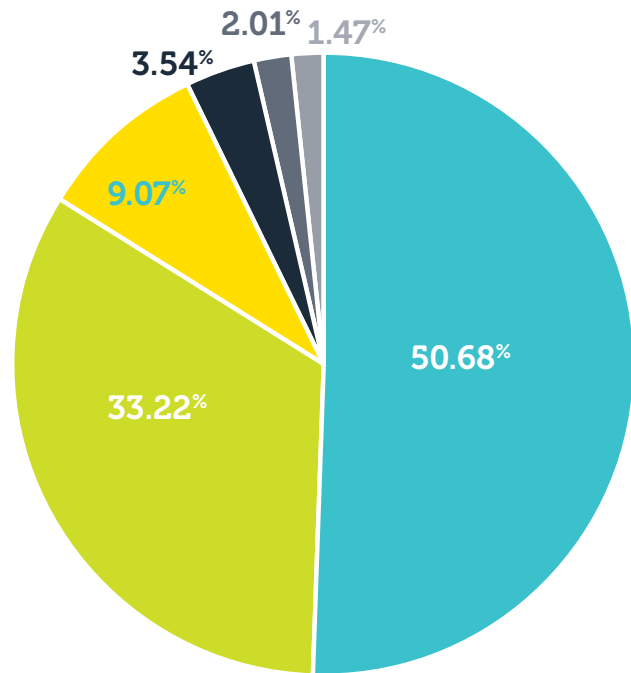
TOTAL EXPENDITURES **\$ 647,812**

Salaries & Training **\$ 467,282**

Travel & Communications **\$ 75,489**

Professional Services **\$ 56,252**

Administration **\$ 48,789**





we've been there,
we get it
and we can help

OUR FUNDERS



pleo.on.ca

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