

Journey Forward



Abiona Centre
For Infant & Early Mental Health

Annual Report 2023–2024

A Message from Our Leadership

Reflecting on Our Journey and Looking Ahead

Reflecting on the past year and looking toward the future fills us with gratitude and optimism. The theme of our leadership report, “Reflecting on Our Journey and Looking Ahead,” captures a period of both challenges and achievements that have shaped our Centre’s growth and direction.

This year has been transformative for Abiona Centre. We have navigated the lingering impacts of the pandemic while fostering innovation and resilience across our programs. Our dedicated staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to maintain and expand our services, ensuring that young parents and their children receive the support they need for mental health and developmental success.

Our journey this year was marked by several key achievements.

- We established a new organizational structure to boost performance, services, and client-focused care through partnerships
- We moved to become an employer of choice attracting and retaining skilled employees and fostering a healthy workplace culture
- We worked to continue to establish Abiona Centre as a Centre of Excellence in infant and early mental health, influencing systemic and social change for young mothers and children
- We strengthened partnerships to community organizations, our donors and government bodies to expand resources and expertise for families

Our CEO plays a crucial role in advancing the strategic objectives of Abiona Centre and also serves as the President of the Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies. Through her leadership, the team has consistently advocated for the needs of young parents and their children sector wide.

Recently, these efforts secured a significant investment of \$1.8 million in the sector by the Provincial government, representing a 21% increase in funding for the MCCSS-funded Young Parent and Infant Agencies. This additional funding will allow us to enhance our services and better address the urgent needs of the young families we support.

Looking ahead, we aim to expand maternal and infant mental health services, implement cutting-edge early childhood research, and enhance advocacy for policies supporting young families in the coming year.

We commit to inclusive practices that respect diverse identities, creating an environment where all families feel valued, understood, and supported.

As we move forward, your continued support remains invaluable. Whether you are a donor, a volunteer, a community partner, or a family who has trusted us with your care, you are the cornerstone of our success and the motivation behind our mission.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Together, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of young parents and their children, fostering a community where early mental health support is accessible, effective, and filled with hope for a bright future.



Jessica Amey
Chair



Ekua Asabea Blair
President & CEO

Board of Directors

Guiding our Journey with Vision and Leadership

Thank you to our dedicated board members for their support and guidance throughout the year. Your commitment to our mission has been instrumental in driving our success and growth.

Jessica Amey – Chair

Lisa Blanchette

Beth Dewitt – Vice Chair

Susan Golets

Edem Akan – Secretary

Catherine Wang*

Alana Buckley – Treasurer

Justine Humphries*

Michael Kuske

Stephanie Wang*

Jalpa Patel

Mitze Mourinho*

Elena Simonetta

Breann Kirincich*

Anika Mehta

Jody Maltby – United Church of Canada,
Regional Council – Ex-officio

Carolina Martelo

Ekua Asabea Blair, President & CEO –
Ex-officio

Hilary Smee

Heather Mundell

**Left during the 2023–2024 fiscal year*

Mission

At Abiona Centre, we seek to create a better future for vulnerable pregnant and parenting young mothers and their children 0–6. Our infant and early childhood mental health programs give our clients the tools they need to build secure relationships with their babies, cope with life's adversities, find help when needed and succeed in life.

Vision

Abiona Centre envisions a world where families led by young women will have the emotional and physical supports to realize their full potential.

Exploring our Campuses

Broadview

Formerly Door of Hope (1901-1904), Victor Home for Women (1904-1989) and The Massey Centre for Women (1989-2023), our Broadview Campus is an inclusive community hub in East York offering a range of comprehensive services including educational programs, transitional housing, mental health support, and childcare facilities. Known for our intensive treatment services, Broadview provides a safe and nurturing space where young mothers can access resources, develop life skills, and build strong foundations for their families' futures.



Humewood

Located in the quiet Humewood neighborhood, Humewood Campus (formerly Humewood House) dates back to 1912, when it was acquired by a group of women from St. Thomas Anglican Church as a home for unwed mothers. Today, it offers a variety of services and programming to support young mothers and their children, including educational programs, transitional housing at 55-57 Humewood Drive, mental health support, and childcare facilities. Home to our Success in Employment for Adolescent Mothers (SEAM) program, Humewood Campus offers access to a Job Coach and a Job Developer to teach young mothers essential workplace skills and help them gain real work experience.

1900 Sheppard

1900 Sheppard is a community of young mothers located near Jane and Sheppard. In collaboration with Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), this campus provides 27 rent-geared-to-income units (23 one-bedroom units and 4 two-bedroom units) to young, homeless or underhoused mothers. Young mothers can stay at 1900 Sheppard for up to four years, during which they will participate in case management, monthly tenant meetings, quarterly service plans, and workshops.



In 2023–2024, Abiona Centre...

1,500+

Served 1,500+ clients/participants across our three campuses.

100+

Provided 100+ young mothers and babies with community housing support.

56,988

Facilitated 56,988 client encounters across all programs.

412

Provided community programs and workshops to 412 clients.

348

Received 348 new enrollees in our programs.

164

Provided 164 young mothers and babies with safe housing at our Centre.





Photo: Grace and Jasmine

A Journey to Stability:

Grace's Story of Resilience and Hope at Abiona Centre

At 19, Grace found out she was pregnant. She was living with her aunt, where she took care of her four younger cousins, managed household chores, attended school, and worked. Pregnancy was a scary thought, but it also motivated her to build a better life. She moved into a youth shelter after her aunt kicked her out, but soon had to find new accommodations as she couldn't have her baby at the shelter.

Desperate for stability, she discovered Abiona Centre. Our Live-In Treatment and Transitional Housing programs provided a safe place where she could finally focus on building a future. The staff at Abiona Centre offered their assistance and helped her plan for life beyond the Centre.

"I have built really great relationships with other moms. We go out together sometimes, we even have a bible study group and it's amazing."

Grace now looks forward to a bright future for herself and her daughter, Jasmine. The availability of childcare at the Centre allows her to focus on her studies, and she is excited to finally complete her education and secure a job. She plans to enroll in a program funded by Ontario Works and take advantage of our Baby and Me rent subsidy program, which will help support her as she transitions to independent living.

Did You Know?

62

We provide Transitional Housing to **62** families at a time across our three campuses.



Photo: Carly Krupnik, Ekua Asabea Blair, and Philip Chown with Marieke Vandekolk and Robyn Small from the TD Philanthropy Team

A special thank you to our friends at TD Bank for their generous donation towards our Transitional Housing program to help us continue supporting young mothers like Grace.

Transforming Lives:

A Teen Mom's Journey in Our Live-In Treatment Program

"I left home when I was 16 because it was not a safe place for me. For a few years, I stayed with friends, but I could only stay in each place for a short time. When I found out I was pregnant, I thought my baby's father and his family would accept me. I was wrong. I found out he was in another relationship and was not interested in fatherhood.

I moved into a youth shelter, but the workers were not equipped to work with teen moms. A nurse at the shelter told me about Abiona Centre and helped me call their intake worker. I moved into the Live-In Treatment program, where I gave birth to my beautiful daughter. Being a single mom at 18 has been incredibly tough, and it means taking on extra responsibilities. It's hard to do everything alone, but Abiona Centre has helped a lot.



Photo: istockphoto.com

I've learned how to take care of my daughter and how to bond with her in Baby Love parenting groups, how to cook in the Food for Thought Cooking Club, and how to manage my money and save in workshops. I even went back to school.

The skills and confidence I've gained through Abiona Centre's programs have empowered me to build a better life for my child. Every day, I am grateful for the guidance and compassion I've received, and I am determined to create a bright future for my daughter."

- Young Mother at Abiona Centre

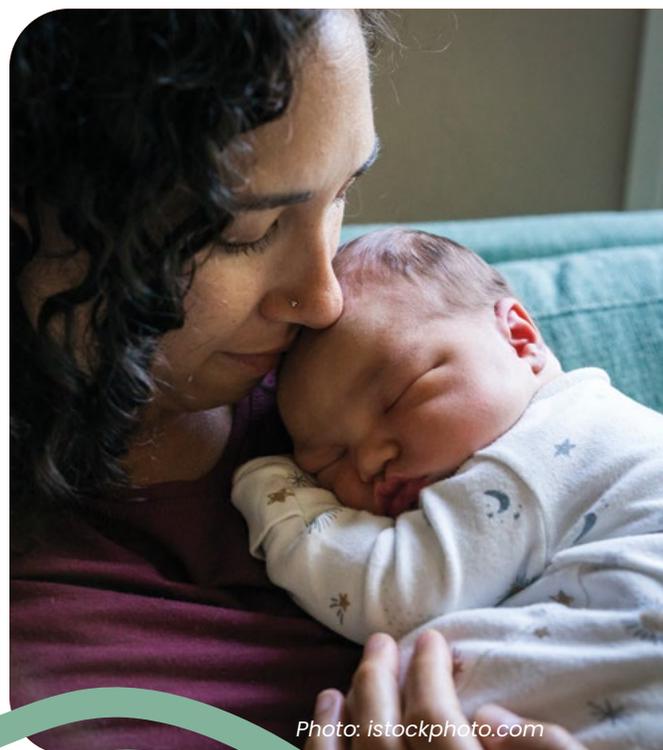


Photo: istockphoto.com

Did You Know?

24/7

Our Live-In Treatment Program provides 24/7 support to up to 10 pregnant adolescent moms, ages 13-21.

29

Our Baby and Me: Our Home Program provides 29 young mothers at a time with rent subsidies of up to **\$800** each. That is **\$278,400** each year!



Building strong young families

Championing Province-Wide Initiatives:

A Journey of Advocacy and Collective Impact

Abiona Centre is proud to lead the Ujima Project, a groundbreaking initiative dedicated to advancing early childhood development and increasing access to young parent services across the province.

In partnership with the Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies (OAYPA), we have created 9 Early Childhood Development Hubs in member agency facilities across Ontario. Each hub is equipped with an Early Literacy Specialist and a Family Navigator, who implement standardized, evidence-based services including developmental screening, early literacy groups, attachment programming (Baby Love) and referrals to specialized services for young families.

"Being a first time mom, I didn't have a lot of resources when it came to my son. After a conversation with my family facilitator, I was able to make a plan for my future and access resources to help with the day-to-day journey of life."

As we enter our last six months of donor funding, we are working hard to secure sustainable funding to ensure that this successful proof of concept pilot continues to empower young parents and fostering early childhood development. Together with our partners, we continue to set new benchmarks for excellence and innovation in the sector, reinforcing our dedication to creating a brighter future for young families.

For more information visit:
<https://www.oaypa.ca/ujima-project>



Photo: Jasmine

Did You Know?

Ujima Project has reached **2,180+** families across Ontario!

2,590+

Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ's) completed

1,950+

children received 1:1 literacy support

360+

literacy groups facilitated

250+

speech and language referrals



Photo: istockphoto.com



Forest Room, Humewood Campus

The Lifeline of Quality Childcare: Supporting Young Families Every Step of the Way

Quality childcare is fundamental to the well-being and development of children and their families, which is why our Early Learning Centre programs are designed to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children. Our Early Learning Centres offer high quality daycare to young families residing at the Centre and families with children 0-4 who live in the broader community.

"The availability of on-site daycare makes it easier for me to go back to school and focus on my studies."

Navigating Early Paths Together: Empowering Families, Enriching Childhoods

The EarlyON Child and Family Centre provides free early learning and literacy programs for caregivers and their children up to age 6. Families can participate in structured programming, receive answers to questions, access information about other community programs, talk to early childhood professionals, and network with parents and caregivers in the community.

Maternal Infant Mental Health: Promoting Child Development with Sensory-Rich Environments

Through a generous donation from Smilezone and Slight Family Foundation, Humewood Campus now has two beautifully renovated program spaces to facilitate infant and early mental health programming. With built-in sensory toys, our Smilezones are the perfect places to conduct developmental screening, run Baby Love parenting groups, and work with young parents to create strong support systems.

"I love to sit on the play mat and watch my baby explore the different corners of the room. I am grateful that such a wonderful place exists, and I am looking forward to coming more often since my baby can't get enough of the lovely paintings and toys inside the room."

Did you know?

100+

Over 100 young mothers and babies have participated in Baby Love groups at Abiona Centre.

A Journey of Triumph:

How the Umoja Project Encouraged a Young Mother's Educational Success

Janelle, a young mother navigating post-secondary education, found herself overwhelmed by the demands of motherhood, full-time work, academic responsibilities, and health issues. Because of this, she considered dropping out of her studies.

In a meeting with her Umoja Project community worker, Janelle explained her frustrations. Together, they unraveled the root cause of her stress and crafted a plan: reduce her course load each semester to create a more manageable schedule.

Janelle embraced the compromise wholeheartedly. She felt a renewed sense of determination and was eager to continue her educational journey without the overwhelming pressure and anxiety she had been carrying alone.



Developed as a COVID-19 initiative, Umoja Project is a community-based home-visiting model to improve and promote positive mental health, resilience, and educational attainment and outcomes for hard-to-engage Black adolescent mothers and their children living in Toronto.

Did you know?

89%

89% of the educational goals set by Umoja Project clients included the pursuit of a degree or diploma.



Success in Employment for Adolescent Mothers:

Empowering Young Mothers on their Journey to Security

The Success in Employment for Adolescent Mothers (SEAM) program teaches essential workplace skills with a goal of finding and maintaining permanent employment. Throughout the journey of this program, young mothers receive 4 weeks of paid job training and complete a 14-week job placement to help them gain real work experience.

Did you know?

64%

Of the young mothers that completed our Success in Employment for Adolescent Mothers (SEAM) program have gained employment.

14%

Are returning to school for higher education or certification programs.

22%

Are continuing to job search.

From Client to Peer Mentor:

Samantha's Journey with HomeNest



Photo: istockphoto.com

After giving birth to her son at 22, Samantha found herself stuck in an abusive relationship as she was unable to financially support her baby on her own. When her son was 6 months old, she made the tough decision to leave the abuse, despite not having a permanent place to stay.

Once she discovered Abiona Centre, Samantha received counselling and housing support. Her HomeNest Facilitator explained her options, ensuring that she explored every avenue available. Finally, Samantha secured safe housing and was on the path to becoming the best version of herself.

"Accessing counselling services at Abiona Centre was crucial in me surviving the hardest chapter of my life... My counsellor encouraged me to seek more intensive care when I wouldn't have otherwise done so."

Samantha's HomeNest Family Support Facilitator didn't just assist with practicalities; she believed in her, helping break down overwhelming goals into manageable steps. Team meetings were where Samantha felt heard and empowered to reclaim power over her life.

"I don't know if true recovery would have been possible for me without that intensive level of support and care."

Motivated by the impact of Abiona Centre's support, Samantha embraced the opportunity to become a HomeNest peer mentor. Sharing her journey and offering support to other young mothers in similar situations has been incredibly fulfilling, allowing her to find purpose in helping others on their paths to recovery and stability.

"It's been an incredible experience to work with a team that sees my lived experience as a tool to better help them. I'm proud both to have been served by this team, as well as to be serving alongside them now."

Did you Know?

80

Abiona Centre's HomeNest program provided WrapAround services to 80 young mothers and babies this year!

A Donor's Journey:

Supporting Dreams and Brighter Futures



2023 Graduate with Abiona Centre High School Program Teacher

Several years ago, my youngest daughter, a makeup artist, volunteered at Abiona Centre (then Massey Centre) to help with makeup for the women's photos. When I Googled directions to pick her up, I discovered Abiona Centre's mission to support young, single moms. The warmth and necessity of their programs immediately resonated with me, and I felt compelled to offer my support.

One spring, I attended a graduation ceremony at Abiona Centre. I was deeply moved by the staff's genuine care and the young women's determination to finish their schooling and move forward in life. This experience reinforced my belief that any support I could provide would be well-utilized.

I am particularly passionate about the encouragement for moms to finish high school, understanding the immense challenge of balancing education and parenting. While I can't fully comprehend their struggles, I deeply empathize and support their courage and dedication.

My commitment to Abiona Centre includes funding the "Dream Scholarship" to help young mothers achieve their dreams, whether it's completing a university semester, buying equipment for a new career, or publishing a book. The heartfelt thank-you cards and letters from scholarship recipients have been incredibly rewarding. My interactions with the Abiona Centre team have always been positive, and I am excited to continue my involvement, knowing that my contributions make a genuine impact on these young women's lives and their children's futures.

- Michelle Illiatovitch, Long-Time Donor

Did you Know?

90%

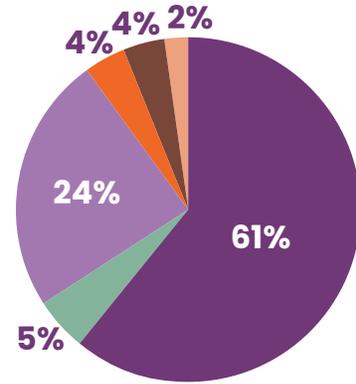
Once settled with us, 90% of our adolescent mothers continue their education and graduate from our on-site high school program!

Financial Highlights:

Ensuring Transparency and Accountability

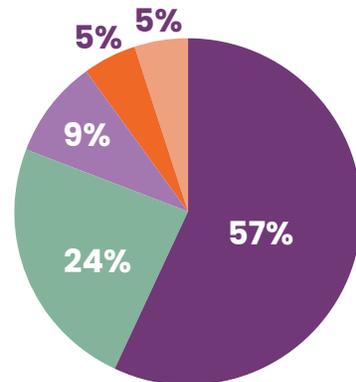
Audited Income statement for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

REVENUES	\$10,873,752
Government Funding	\$6,678,206
Grants from Other Agencies	\$501,129
Fundraising & Special Project Donation	\$2,621,168
Rental & Other Income	\$392,132
Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions	\$490,701
Investment Income	\$190,416



- Government Funding
- Grants from Other Agencies
- Fundraising & Special Project Donation
- Rental & Other Income
- Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions
- Investment Income

EXPENSES	\$10,937,695
Salaries & Benefits*	\$6,200,721
Programs	\$2,639,983
Occupancy	\$964,923
Administration	\$560,982
Amortization	\$571,086



- Salaries & Benefits
- Programs
- Occupancy
- Administration
- Amortization

DEFICIT	-\$63,943
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* includes administration salaries

Thank You to our Donors and Funders

Government of Canada

Canada Revenue Agency, Children's Special Allowances
Employment and Social Development Canada
Public Health Agency of Canada

Province of Ontario

Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services

City of Toronto

Children's Services
Community Service Partnerships
Housing Stability Services, Housing Secretariat
Investing In Neighbourhoods

\$1,000,000+

Anonymous

\$100,000+

Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation
TD Bank Group

\$50,000-\$99,999

Leslois Shaw Foundation
ScotiaRISE
State Street Foundation
The Krawczyk Family Foundation

\$10,000-\$49,999

Anonymous (2)
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Community Services Recovery Fund at Toronto Foundation
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Greater Toronto Apartment Association
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The Home Depot Canada Foundation
The Tenaquip Foundation
The United Church of Canada Foundation
Throop Family Foundation
Tippet Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

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Rona Stockyards #55130
Shining Waters Regional Council
Stephan & Jeannie von Buttlar
William Szego

\$1,000-\$4,999

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James Ballinger
Sandra Bennett
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Janet Bodley
Nancy Brown
Alana & Sam Buckley
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Mount Albert Home Hardware Building Centre
Heather Mundell
Nixon Charitable Foundation
Perry Family Charitable Fund
M.J. Perry
Janet Pollivy
Edward Popp
RBC Foundation
Shoppers Drug Mart LIFE Foundation
Kathleen Spence
Sasithra Thanabalan
The American Women's Club of Toronto
The Dawson Family Sharing Foundation
Timothy Eaton Memorial Church

\$500-\$999

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Thank you for
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Join Us on
Our Journey!



Abiona Centre
For Infant & Early Mental Health

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