

Open Hearts Healthy Minds Strong Communities



Strategic Plan 2021-2026



WE'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES, AGAIN

For more than 100 years, Family Service Toronto has been welcoming residents into a caring community that supports families and individuals to overcome adversity and to thrive.

As Toronto has changed, so have we. During times of need, FST and its predecessors stepped forward and re-invented the organization to serve Toronto's residents.

- Spanish Flu Epidemic, 1918** – Neighbourhood Workers Association (NWA) becomes a major organizing centre for relief work distributing thousands of pneumonia jackets, masks, bedding and clothing to afflicted families.
- Great Depression, 1932** – NWA Clothing and Sewing Centre serves 85 struggling families daily with a Cobbler Department repairing and giving away shoes.
- Outreach to Under-Served Communities, 1977** – Family Service Association (FSA) launches multilingual Family Support Program for families with developmentally disabled children.
- LGBTQ Inclusion, 1996** – FSA merges with Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays to create separate HIV/AIDS and David Kelley LGBTQ counselling programs.
- PassportONE, 2018** – Family Service Toronto (FST) assumes province-wide responsibility for the processing of Passport reimbursements for people with developmental disabilities.

Throughout a century of reinvention, FST has been constant in our belief in people and this city — and the determination with which we stand for a fairer, more compassionate society.

Today, FST is one of Canada's largest social service agencies that works with and for the city's residents. Each day across Toronto, you will find FST staff providing services to people with mental health needs, persons impacted by family violence, and people with developmental disabilities.

Our mission is shaped by our understanding of poverty and the pernicious effects of marginalization and discrimination. And so while we direct our energies to support individuals and families, we also work upstream to influence policy, build knowledge, strengthen communities and advocate for system change.

THIS IS A MOMENT THAT WILL DEFINE US

Now, 102 years after the 1918 influenza epidemic brought Toronto and the world to a standstill, we are confronting a new threat: a novel coronavirus that has disrupted our lives in ways many of us thought unimaginable. And though COVID-19 has changed the world, its impact on this city has only just begun.

As we imagine the next five years, we face uncertainty: How quickly will the pandemic pass? What will its lingering effects be? How soon will the economy recover? How will governments address looming deficits? Will the net result be the strengthening or weakening of our social contract? What about the vitality of the relationships that bind us to one another and our communities?

So far, we can see how the pandemic has accentuated many of the challenges faced by our clients and Toronto's residents. COVID-19 is disproportionately striking the city's most vulnerable. The pandemic has sharpened the gross inequities that divide the city and which cannot be ignored. Those with precarious housing and jobs have been among the first to lose both. Public health authorities are already talking about concurrent pandemics as levels of family violence, substance abuse and mental distress rise.

Recently, the brutal murder by police of American George Floyd has prompted a wave of protests across the US, Canada and far beyond. Toronto Public Health has rightly declared anti-black racism itself a public health crisis.

COVID-19 has changed how we work but not what we're working to achieve.

Anti-Black racism reminds us that we continue to participate in and benefit from systems of oppression even as we work to dismantle them.

We understand poverty to be an enduring source of oppression that can only be addressed by ensuring that people have the means they deserve and that our society's vast resources are shared more justly.

These twin crises must heighten our sense of urgency, and sharpen our focus. Over the next five years, as we confront these challenges, FST will redouble its efforts to support our team members and the residents we serve.

OUR VISION

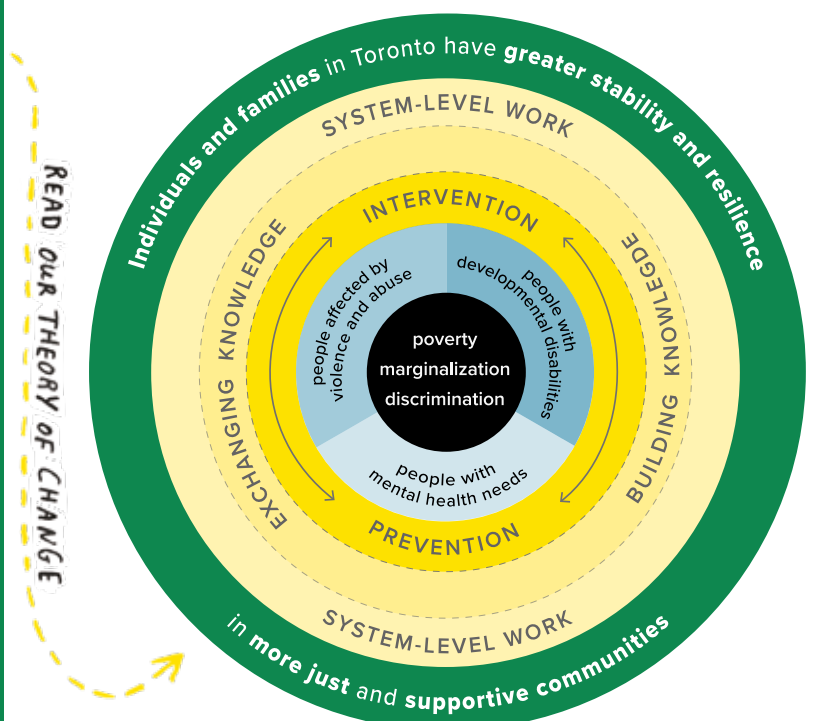
Our new strategic plan is called 'Open Hearts, Healthy Minds, Strong Communities' — a title that captures our outlook and ambition for the next five years.

- We want compassionate hearts that are open to the many different needs and experiences of Toronto's residents
- We want minds that are healthy and can thrive despite past traumas and adversity
- We want communities that are strong because their members are connected, active and resilient

At FST, our overarching vision remains: We want individuals and families in Toronto to have greater stability and resilience in more just and supportive communities.

To achieve this vision, we will pursue a new series of strategic directions that build on our strengths:

- FST's theory of change provides an integrated way of understanding the organization's activities and focus on the underlying forces of poverty, marginalization and discrimination that FST works to alleviate.
- FST's three core service areas — mental health, family violence and developmental disabilities — remain exceptionally relevant and will remain the focus of our work.
- FST's commitment to research and advocacy provides the organization with a distinctive public policy capacity that contributes to systemic change.



WHAT WE SEE

We need to expand access to counselling and mental health services



One in five Canadians — more than a half million Torontonians — report having unmet mental health needs.

This means individuals who are struggling to cope with significant stress, grief, depression, anxiety or trauma. The personal impact is heavy and the true social cost is incalculable. Families fall apart, people lose jobs, student success is derailed.

Yet we have effective treatments and we can support good mental health by providing access to counselling and various psychotherapies.

Currently, FST provides counselling and mental health services to almost 3,200 clients — yet the wait time to see a counsellor can last more than one year, especially for people with specific service or language needs. Together, FST's counsellors are able to meet less than one percent of demand.

Our bottom line: The only way to better meet this demand is to identify new sources of funding, pursue new partnerships, and develop new approaches to care.

WHAT WE SEE

We need meaningful reforms and investments that will significantly reduce the incidence of violence against women and gender-based violence

Tragically, the rate of family violence in Toronto has diminished only slightly over the past decade.

Women's shelters remain full and social services are overstretched. Consequently, too many women are forced to stay in abusive relationships. FST supports more than 12,000 women, children and men through a variety of voluntary and court-mandated programs.

Meaningful change will only come about in two ways. First, serious reforms to the family court process are needed to accelerate access to justice, safety and resolution. Second, we need to work systemically to change social attitudes to violence against women — and this means dedicating more resources to work with men as well.

Our bottom line: FST is a respected leader for its Family Violence programs. It needs to help lead the way on judicial reform and develop a more comprehensive approach to supporting families-at-risk including preventative work with men.



WHAT WE SEE

We need to meet the fast growing demand for unique disability services like Ontario's Passport program



There are more than 66,000 adults with developmental disabilities in Ontario and more than two-thirds — 50,000 — are supported by PassportONE.

Ontario's Passport program is one of the world's largest and most successful implementations of an individualized accounts program. It is highly valued by its clients who rely on both the Passport and Options programs to reimburse claims and coordinate services. Last year, enrollment across Ontario grew by more than 76%.

FST has a unique responsibility to be a steward for this program and its resources — and to ensure its continued success. This means working with our Passport partners to strengthen program criteria and processes, and to learn from the vast data produced by the PassportONE platform.

Our bottom line: FST isn't the back office for PassportONE — it's Ontario's Passport provider and champion. FST has to use the opportunity to significantly influence the success and evolution of this innovative model and essential service.

WHAT WE SEE

We need a more integrated approach to achieving upstream policy reforms



Despite modest national success reducing the child poverty rate, Toronto has yet to see any notable improvements. Today, one in five children in Toronto grows up in low-income families.

The Greater Toronto Area is Canada's economic engine, but as many researchers have demonstrated, it is also an engine for inequality. While it remains a destination for two-thirds of newcomers to Canada, unaffordable housing and precarious employment make it harder for low-income families to get-ahead.

Canadian municipalities do not have the fiscal tools to reduce poverty. Only the provincial and federal governments can adopt policies that can create and transfer wealth. This is why FST as part of a pan-Canadian coalition has long urged federal action to reduce child poverty.

The 2016 federal Canada Child Benefit has become an important tool for reducing poverty but it is unlikely to be enough. Campaign 2000 must renew its call for stronger measures — while also renewing its mission and membership.

Our bottom line: FST has an important leadership role to play. Combined strengths in advocacy and research could support an expanded public policy function to secure more support for poverty reduction as well as mental health services, judicial reform and developmental disability services.

We have a passionate team that understands the urgency of our mission

FST team members are passionate about the people and communities they serve. They want FST to respond with urgency and creativity to the needs they see. But we also know that with more than 160 people working across five different locations some team members feel disempowered and disconnected. They struggle to make sense of outdated processes and can feel cut off and undervalued.

At its best, FST responds with agility and compassion. These competencies are built on a foundation of great staff culture, clear organizational priorities, strong core systems and relevant client services. To be our best, we know we need to overcome some of the barriers to collaboration and strengthen communications across the organization.

Our bottom line: FST should be the best place to work for people passionate about providing vital social and family services to Torontonians. Investing in our people and our organization will be a major focus for this plan.

OUR NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Over the new five years, FST will pursue four strategic directions

1. **Significantly increase access to counselling and mental health services across Toronto**
2. **Significantly reduce systemic barriers for women seeking justice and healing and increase community supports for families impacted by violence including those who use violence**
3. **Deliver on the Passport ‘promise’ to enhance the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their caregivers, and lead the evolution of individualized account services within developmental services and beyond**
4. **Become an indispensable source for applied research and social action that strengthens the community sector and helps us to understand and impact the root causes of poverty, discrimination and marginalization**

We will pursue these directions by strengthening the FST team and implementing major changes across our three core service areas:

- a. **Community Counselling and Mental Health,**
- b. **Violence against Women / Gender-based Violence,**
- c. **Developmental Disabilities.**

To amplify our capabilities, we will also integrate our advocacy and research work to create a new Public Policy function.

Our commitments

A. STRENGTHENING THE FST TEAM

By 2026, FST will:

1. Exemplify an agile, integrated team working with a sense of urgency and compassion
2. Affirm and support the vital role of clients and communities to strengthening services and well-being
3. Build a healthy workplace that fosters growth and connection

To achieve this, we commit to:

- Work more collaboratively towards shared goals
- Strengthen internal communications
- Share ownership and responsibility for performance

By:

- Focussing on staff engagement and meaningful client participation and peer work
- Investing in internal and external communications
- Strengthening IT systems for improved service delivery

B. EXPANDING COMMUNITY COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

By 2026, FST will:

1. Work to ensure quality, evidence-informed counselling services for all

To achieve this, we commit to:

- Rethink our approach to counselling services
- Double access to our counselling services
- Introduce more group and virtual options

By:

- Creating new service models
- Establishing partnerships to build access
- Securing health system funding and other revenues

C. REDUCING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN/ GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

By 2026, FST will:

1. Take meaningful steps towards achieving a trauma-informed legal and judicial system
2. Realize a sustained reduction in violence against women and gender-based violence

To achieve this, we commit to:

- Challenge the system status quo
- Engage with men
- Strengthen engagement with women’s shelters

By:

- Convening sectoral, legal and judicial system actors
- Developing new, evidence-based programs for men
- Strengthening our advocacy on behalf of women and the need for systemic reform

D. ENHANCING DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY SERVICES

By 2026, FST will:

1. Be internationally recognized as a leader in implementing individualized account services

To achieve this, we commit to:

- Refine the Passport model
- Strengthen accountabilities within the program
- Provide stewardship for the evolution of individualized account programs

By:

- Investing in the model
- Communicating research findings with respect to the model
- Expanding the administrative platform to serve new clients and sectors

E. DEVELOPING A PUBLIC POLICY CAPABILITY

By 2026, FST will:

1. Collaborate with other partners to achieve a sustained reduction in poverty in Toronto and across Canada
2. Realize increased access to quality counselling services in Toronto

To achieve this, we commit to:

- Renew our policy, advocacy and community networks
- Develop new calls for action and reform
- Strengthen the connections between our public policy capability and our programs

By:

- Integrating our research and advocacy functions
- Identifying and pursuing new policy goals
- Supplying applied research expertise to sectoral partners

Foundational Strategies

We know that our ability to achieve our strategic directions depends on our ability to build strong foundations that support this work. Over the next five years, every FST team member will play a part in helping us to strengthen these foundations and deliver these commitments.

OUR PEOPLE

1. We will cultivate the skills that allow each of us to be more agile and adaptive
2. We will support professional development and personal growth
3. We will hold one another accountable for our mission, impact and actions

OUR CULTURE

1. We will reward innovation that responds to the needs of our communities
2. We will strengthen our ability to collaborate to achieve our shared goals and learn from our shortcomings and failures
3. We will stand up as a leader in the community sector to better support our partners and beneficiaries

OUR SYSTEMS

1. We will invest in our HR systems and supports
2. We will invest in our business platforms to create more efficient and intuitive systems
3. We will implement metrics that allow us to better evaluate our impact and improve our services

OUR FUNDING

1. We will aggressively pursue opportunities that allow us to diversify and increase our revenues
2. We will manage our assets to support and expand our services
3. We will introduce new social enterprise models that help to expand our service offering

OUR COMMUNITY

1. We will ensure that a community development ethos is at the heart of our services
2. We will work to engage our service users and communities to ensure that our services are responsive and appropriate
3. We will support individuals and communities to take action on the issues that matter to them

AT-A-GLANCE: FST'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

SERVICE AREAS	FST TEAM	COMMUNITY COUNSELLING & MENTAL HEALTH	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN/GENDER BASED VIOLENCE	DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES	PUBLIC POLICY
SERVICE VISION	An agile, integrated team working with a sense of urgency and compassion	Quality, evidence-informed counselling services for all	A trauma-informed legal and judicial system	World-leading development and implementation of individualized account services	A sustained reduction in poverty in Toronto and across Canada
	A vital role for clients and communities to strengthen services and well-being		A sustained reduction in violence against women and gender-based violence		Increased access to quality counselling services in Toronto
	A healthy workplace fostering growth and connection				
GOALS	Work more collaboratively towards shared goals	Rethink approach to counselling services	Challenge the system status quo	Refine the Passport model	Renew networks
	Strengthen internal communications	Double access to counselling services	Engage with men	Strengthen program accountability	Develop new calls
	Share ownership and responsibility for performance	Introduce more group and virtual options	Strengthen supports to women's shelters	Provide stewardship	Strengthen connection to programs
ACTIONS	Focus on staff engagement and meaningful client participation and peer work	Create new service models	Convene system actors	Invest in the model	Integrate research and advocacy functions
	Invest in internal and external communications	Establish partnerships to build access	Develop new programs for men	Communicate findings	Identify and pursue new policy goals
	Strengthen IT systems for improved service delivery	Pursue health funding and other revenues	Strengthen advocacy	Expand administrative platform	Supply applied research expertise

AT-A-GLANCE: FST'S FOUNDATIONAL STRATEGIES

People	Culture	Systems	Funding	Community
We will cultivate the skills that allow each of us to be more agile and adaptive	We will reward innovation that responds to the needs of our communities	We will invest in our HR systems and supports	We will aggressively pursue opportunities that allow us to diversify and increase our revenues	We will ensure that a community development ethos is at the heart of our services
We will support professional development and personal growth	We will strengthen our ability to collaborate to achieve our shared goals	We will invest in our business platforms to create more efficient and intuitive systems	We will manage our assets to support and expand our services	We will work to engage our service users and communities to ensure that our services are responsive and appropriate
We will hold one another accountable for our mission, impact and actions	We will stand up as a leader in the community sector to better support our partners and beneficiaries	We will implement metrics that allow us to better evaluate our impact and improve our services	We will introduce new social enterprise models that help to expand our service offering	We will support individuals and communities to take action on the issues that matter to them

MEASURING SUCCESS

The purpose of FST's Strategic Plan 2021-2026 is to deliver on the promise of our intended impact: individuals and families in Toronto have greater stability and resilience in more just and supportive communities. That is the purpose of our work on Community Counselling and Mental Health, Family Violence/Gender-Based Violence, Developmental Disabilities and Public Policy.

How we measure our success:

- FST uses two tools to drive towards our goals and evaluate our progress. Our accountability plan assigns responsibilities and identifies outcomes that allow us to assess our progress and ensure that FST maintains its focus and delivers our strategic directions by March 31st 2026. Our annual operational plan describes specific steps FST will take each year to realize its goals — steps which are tracked in our quarterly operational reports

In addition, FST will:

- Monitor the emotional and mental resilience of clients and participants
- FST will gather and share client stories to ensure that we remain grounded in the concerns and lived experiences of those we serve
- Encourage the use of 'failure' reports so that we cultivate a healthy attitude to taking smart risks and innovation
- Develop a dashboard for our directors, senior managers, staff, funders and the public that provides data on key outputs such as service hours, new clients, and client demographics allowing us to better track our progress and resources

FST service by the numbers 2019/2020

ANNUAL REPORT ITEM	2019-20 STATS
Service locations	9
Languages of service	30
Community programs	29
Skilled and talented staff	175
Dedicated volunteers and students	100
Generous donors and funders	69
People served through FST programs	79,168
Visitors to FST's website	115,464

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our new strategic plan is the result of more than six months of conversations within FST and across our sector. We have examined the future of family services and reconsidered many of the assumptions behind our work. Now as we begin to deliver the elements of this ambitious plan, we need your help more than ever.

For clients, help us by:

- Joining an upcoming FST client and resident workshop and working with us to strengthen and improve our services
- Helping other FST clients by joining a staff-supported peer group or becoming a peer mentor
- Becoming active in your community and letting others know about the services we offer
- Urging governments to better address the needs of marginalized Canadians and the systems of oppression that continue to diminish and harm our society

For staff, help us by:

- Taking initiative and continuing to show passion every day for meeting the needs of the people we serve
- Connecting with others at FST to strengthen our culture and sense of community
- Finding new ways to provide value to Toronto residents, and sharing your ideas so we can bring them to life

For funders, help us by:

- Learning with us and participating in the evolution of these essential services
- Recognizing the significant unmet need for family services across Toronto
- Sharing data with us and inspiring us to do even better
- Increasing support so that we can be there for the Toronto residents who need us

For members of the public, help us by:

- Learning about the services we provide and helping to eliminate the stigma that can prevent people from seeking help
- Becoming advocates for your community and neighbours
- Volunteering and becoming engaged with the work of organizations like ours, as well as other important community organizations throughout Toronto

Do you have questions or ideas?

We want to hear from you:

Email: info@familyservicetoronto.org or

Tel: 416 595 9230 x 258



FAMILY SERVICE TORONTO
For People. For Change.