



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



EPILEPSY
Toronto
See the Person



VISION

We envision a world in which **epilepsy and seizures** are widely understood, and where those who live with them **feel fully supported.**

MISSION

To promote **independence** and **quality of life** for people with epilepsy and their families through **support services, information, advocacy, and public awareness.**



This past year at Epilepsy Toronto has been defined by innovation, inclusion, and impact. From empowering young people to equipping adults with life-changing tools, our team has continued to respond to the evolving needs of the epilepsy community with creativity and compassion.

In 2024, our **Employment Services** underwent a bold transformation—adopting a new integrated model and launching the **SeizeABILITY! program**.

At the same time, our **Children & Youth Services and Adult Services** teams deepened their work with tailored programming, support groups, new self-management programs and pioneering initiatives like neurobehavioural therapy and functional seizure education.

We also saw new milestones in our **life skills training**, where participants flourished through customized learning, mentorship, and mental wellness practices. Public education extended its reach too—into Indigenous communities, campuses, and cultural spaces—ensuring epilepsy awareness is more inclusive and far-reaching than ever before.

And through it all, we celebrated. From the **record-breaking Purple Walk** to joyful summer BBQs, family picnics, Friday recreation groups and a holiday party, all filled with moments of connection and purpose.

Like many non-profits today, Epilepsy Toronto is navigating a challenging funding landscape. That's why your continued support matters more than ever. Together, we can ensure that these vital programs not only continue, but grow to reach even more individuals and families who need them.

Thank you for walking beside us. Your belief in our mission fuels everything we do—and together, we are building a more understanding and supportive world for those living with epilepsy.

With deep appreciation,

Daryl Yeo
President of the Board
Epilepsy Toronto



CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES



In 2024, Epilepsy Toronto's Children and Youth Services continued to serve as a vital resource for young individuals and their families navigating life with epilepsy. Throughout the year, clients demonstrated remarkable resilience and empowerment, inspiring the team with their courage and determination. Looking ahead to 2025, the department remains committed to evolving its services in alignment with the diverse and unique needs of the families it supports. The voices of these families guide every step toward building inclusive, informed, and supportive environments for children and youth living with epilepsy.

Katie Armstrong, MSW, RSW
Director of Children and Youth Services

"Facing our child's epilepsy diagnosis was a very scary time. I am so touched by the care and kindness of everyone at Epilepsy Toronto. Your guidance, education and calm understanding has helped us immensely."



HIGHLIGHTS & NEW INITIATIVES:



TARGETED PROGRAMS

- Babies and Tots.
- Youth Meet-ups: baking, crafting and socializing.
- Ready to Launch (transition program for youth and parents/caregivers)
- UPLIFT for Caregivers

FAMILY EVENTS

Our family events connect parents of children newly diagnosed with epilepsy with long-time members to engage in fun, educational activities.

- Purple Day Prep Party
- Purple Walk Kick Off BBQ
- Summer Picnic
- Purple Pumpkin Party



SPECIALIZED SUPPORT GROUPS

Our specialized support groups offer a safe space for self-reflection and shared experiences.

- Parent Support Group
- Siblings Group
- Young Adults Group
- Surgery Support Group for Caregivers



ADULT SERVICES



In 2024, the Adult Services team experienced a year of impactful growth, refinement, and community engagement. Service delivery expanded to include new evidence-based programs and a deeper focus on functional seizures. These developments reflected the department's commitment to compassionate, collaborative, and evidence-driven care.

We're incredibly thankful to our staff, volunteers, partners, and—most of all—our clients for making 2024 such a powerful year of progress and connection.

Rosie Smith, MA, RP
Director of Adult Services

"As a parent of an adult child living with epilepsy, these sessions have proven to be a Godsend. I am so relieved to get information and assistance on how to help my son deal with his condition. Thank You!"



HIGHLIGHTS & NEW INITIATIVES:



SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

We expanded access to evidence-based self-management programs. For adults with epilepsy, these programs can lead to better seizure control, fewer emergency visits, and improved overall quality of life. When dealing with a condition as unpredictable and stigmatized as epilepsy, these programs give people greater confidence, control, and connection.



SURGERY SUPPORT

Epilepsy surgery offers hope to those living with drug-resistant epilepsy, but it also comes with complex decisions and emotional challenges. Our Surgery Support Group, run in partnership with Toronto Western Hospital, provides a trusted space to connect with peers who've been through it—and remains a powerful source of clarity, comfort, and community.



COUNSELLING SERVICES

We delivered individual counselling and support to over 150 clients.



FUNCTIONAL SEIZURE PROGRAMMING

With funding from the Ontario Brain Institute, we launched research into a group-based Neurobehavioural Therapy program for individuals with functional seizures—an often misunderstood and misdiagnosed condition. One of the few programs of its kind in Canada, it helps participants understand their symptoms, build coping strategies, and reduce seizure frequency.



WEBINARS

Education and awareness continued to be a key priority. We hosted two well-attended webinars covering the latest in epilepsy surgery and strategies for managing epilepsy-related headaches. Feedback was highly positive, with 100% of attendees reporting satisfaction and new insights gained.



EPILEPSY FUNDAMENTALS

We facilitated 10 group sessions focused on epilepsy fundamentals to support individuals newly diagnosed with epilepsy in understanding their condition and beginning their self-management journey.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



2024 marked a year of significant transformation for Epilepsy Toronto's Employment Department, transitioning from ODSP and OEAS to a new Integrated Employment Services model introduced by the province of Ontario. We continue to provide specialized career counselling and epilepsy-centred workplace accommodation strategies, but eagerly anticipate many new opportunities for innovation and expanded support.

Carter Hammet
Employment Services Manager

"I connected with Epilepsy Toronto just months after my diagnosis, feeling overwhelmed and alone. When epilepsy affected my ability to work, the Employment Services team helped me navigate job loss, build new skills, and even find new opportunities through their network."

There may be no cure for epilepsy, but the support I've received here has been life-changing. The team has helped me feel seen, supported, and empowered every step of the way."



HIGHLIGHTS & NEW INITIATIVES:

NEW EMPLOYMENT MODEL

The long-standing employment model was redesigned to reflect the IES framework, streamlining services and improving efficiency.

SOFT SKILLS TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Workshops were developed using the federal "Skills for Success" model, covering communication, collaboration, time management, stress management, problem solving, and innovation.



NEW SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The employment team piloted a new social enterprise at BuskerFest, 2024. Our Café for a Cause coffee cart sold hot and cold beverages while raising funds for Epilepsy Toronto. The program officially launched in the Spring of 2025, training clients in hospitality and offering them a meaningful work experience.



LAUNCH OF SEIZEABILITY! PROGRAM

With the support of Employment and Social Development Canada, we created a new work experience program for youth with epilepsy that provides career planning, training in work fundamentals, and real world paid internships.



SECURING FUTURES

Life Skills Program



This past year we celebrated the graduation of our second cohort and increased enrollment by 25% for our third cohort. We continue to learn from our clients and tailor this robust program to meet their needs to safely live on their own through innovative modifications.

Leah Sultan-Khan, EdD, MA, CHES
Director of Community Engagement,
Public Education & Life Skills Training



"The Securing Futures program changed my life in unimaginable ways. The team's patience and guidance ignited a motivation in me I thought I had lost. I am grateful to the facilitators for helping me find my footing in life and encouraging me to improve myself and tackle life with confidence and empowerment.

"I am so proud to be part of this program and have felt welcomed from the beginning. The life skills I have learnt have made me a strong and confident person."

HIGHLIGHTS & NEW INITIATIVES:



FLEXIBLE ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

We established a fee-for-service model through **MyCommunityHub**, allowing participants to **tailor their experience** by selecting either the full 18-month program or a specific life skill sector that best fits their needs. To ensure accessibility, we awarded scholarships and bursaries to clients facing financial challenges, keeping the program inclusive and accessible.

CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENTS

We refined the curriculum from seven to five life skill sectors; implemented new safety and inclusivity protocols to foster a supportive environment; and adjusted the eligibility criteria based on learnings from previous cohorts.



PROGRAM MILESTONES

We began monthly **Show & Tell Fridays**, where participants could share pictures of their progress from their home environments, completing daily living tasks.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

We established **mentoring roles** and a new **social group**—Social Squad—for recreation and peer support.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

We added **meditation** and **self-care** practices to boost mental well-being.

MORE TAILORED APPROACH

We implemented **goal setting weeks** for each life skill area, including accountability check-ins.

PUBLIC EDUCATION, AND DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



In 2024, the Public Education team enhanced the ambassador program and expanded outreach efforts within Indigenous communities, community health centers, post-secondary institutions, school board programs and youth-led initiatives.

Leah Sultan-Khan, EdD, MA, CHES
Director of Community Engagement,
Public Education & Life Skills Training



“Thank you for raising awareness of epilepsy. It was incredibly enlightening to learn more about the symptoms of epilepsy and the best ways to support individuals living with it. I really appreciated hearing the personal stories shared by the speakers—it was both moving and inspiring to witness their resilience. A heartfelt thank you to each of them for their bravery and openness in sharing their experiences.”

HIGHLIGHTS & NEW INITIATIVES:



CULTURAL LEARNING THROUGH INDIGENOUS LENS

We collaborated with **Native Child and Family Services** in organizing an Indigenous drumming circle event for the Epilepsy Toronto team. Staff participated in traditional drumming and shared a meal prepared by our Indigenous partners, fostering cultural understanding and authentic engagement.

EXPANDED CAMPUS OUTREACH

We presented at several new post-secondary institutions, including Niagara College Canada and the Centre for Indigenous Student Services (CISS) at York University, and engaged with young leaders at national events like the Canadian Youth Club Summit (CYCS).

STUDENT LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

We collaborated with Students for Epilepsy Awareness (SEA) and engaged student leaders in advocacy, inviting them to participate in our Advisory Committee.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We strengthened ties with Rexdale Women's Centre by presenting more epilepsy education sessions and created new connections with Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and Disability organizations to raise awareness of epilepsy and demystify misconceptions.



RECREATION SERVICES



2024 saw continued enthusiasm for recreational services at Epilepsy Toronto. Trivia, Bingo, Social and Friday Recreation Groups all continued throughout the year. Most of the activities took place virtually, but we had another full year of in-person Friday Recreation Groups held every other week. Clients had great fun, learning to collaborate, creating friendships and continuing to create a true sense of connection with other members.

John Spataro
Recreation Manager

HIGHLIGHTS & ACTIVITIES:

- ET Rec Olympics 2024
- Bingo & giveaways
- ROM Dinosaur exhibit
- Valentine's Day cards and roses
- Movie nights
- Gardening at ET office
- Purple Walk poster painting
- Thanksgiving mural decoration
- Purple Pumpkin Painting Party
- Mugs Decorating
- Chats over coffee and tea



HEARING FROM OUR MEMBERS:



"I'm grateful to have these groups. Thank you."



"I feel part of a group. I feel happier and always look forward to the next meeting with the group."



"When I joined the group, everyone was so kind and welcoming, I never felt out of place!"



MORE ABOUT 2024

Events, Campaigns & Fundraisings



PURPLE WALK

The 10th Annual Purple Walk broke records achieving our highest attendance and fundraising totals ever for this event. For the first time, the day included a community pancake breakfast, adding a new, maple-syrup sweet touch to this signature event.



AWARENESS MONTH CAMPAIGN

During the 2024 March Awareness Month, Epilepsy Toronto partnered with OUTEDGE to launch the powerful public campaign "Epilepsy Doesn't Discriminate, People Do," featured in high-traffic areas like Yonge-Dundas Square. The campaign proudly spotlighted Alessandro, a member of the Children and Youth program.



BUSKERFEST & BARK IN THE PARK

In 2024, the Toronto International BuskerFest turned 25 with a refreshed layout and some wildly popular Foam Parties, while Bark in the Park TO marked its second year, delighting dog lovers of all ages. Together, these vibrant festivals brought the community together for four days of fun and fundraising for Epilepsy Toronto.



SUDEP CAMPAIGN

In October, Epilepsy Toronto launched a SUDEP (Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy) awareness campaign, featuring a powerful personal story from one of our clients to help foster understanding and increase awareness around this critical issue.

RAFFLES

To strengthen fundraising efforts, the team introduced new strategies, including 50/50 draws at events and raffles that gave participants a chance to win Leafs, Raptors and Taylor Swift concert tickets - an exciting way to engage supporters while raising vital funds.



HOLIDAY FAIR

The Holiday Fair returned to Mel Lastman Square for its second year and featured exciting additions like the Coca-Cola Holiday Caravan and the LEGO Brickmas Exhibition, delighting visitors of all ages.



HOLIDAY PARTY

The year concluded with a joyful Holiday Party at the office, where members and their families enjoyed photos with Santa (and the Grinch), lively games like human bingo, and plenty of time to connect and socialize. This spirit of togetherness carried through into the new year.

THANK YOU

Thank you to our members, supporters, funders, volunteers and community partners on whose generosity we have come to depend. Your support is making a difference in people's lives every single day.



Community Supporters

- ABC Life Literacy Canada
- AdBands
- Addus
- Canadian Epilepsy Alliance
- Centennial College.
- Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) of Canada
- Community Living Toronto
- Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), Toronto Region
- Dori Zener and Associates
- Downtown Yonge BIA
- Dr. Roz's Healing Place
- East Scarborough Storefront
- Ecclesiastical Insurance
- Ell'Events
- Emma IS
- Endo Pharma
- Epilepsy Ontario
- George Brown College
- Hull & Hull LLP
- Humber College
- Jazz Pharmaceuticals
- Kindercare Pediatrics
- Lafontaine Iron Werks Inc.
- Lego Canada
- LivaNova
- Mackenzie Together Charitable Foundation
- Mennonite New Life Centre
- Mount Pleasant BIA
- MyCommunityHub
- Native Child and Family Services Toronto
- Nieuport Aviation

- Ontario Brain Institute
- Ontario Disability Employment Network
- OUTEDGE Media
- Owlware
- Paladin Pharma
- Partners for Planning
- Project ECHO
- Project Sunshine
- Realize Canada
- Rexdale Community Health Centre (RCHC)
- Rexdale Women's Centre (RWC)
- SickKids Hospital
- Sprucewood Shores
- Students for Epilepsy Awareness, U of T
- Surrey Place
- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Toronto District School Board
- Toronto District School Board's Adult Education Program
- TD Bank
- Toronto Fire Services
- Toronto Public Library
- Niagara College Canada
- York University
- Toronto Western Hospital
- University of Toronto
- Works4You Employment



Special Friends

- Jolly Abrakasa
- Andrew Adegbite
- Frank Bar
- Battaglia Family
- Katerina Bekas
- Aicha Belghiti
- Dr. Eduard Bercovici
- Ann Blanchette
- Kealin Bobb
- Mikayla Bobb
- MPP Stephanie Bowman
- Sean Boyd

Special Friends

- Anthony Brum
- Mel Carrey
- Brenda Colucci
- Patricia & Mark Davis
- Magdalene D'Cruze
- Alyssa Diamond
- Monica Diaz-Greco
- Stephanie DiNucci
- Dr. Elizabeth Donner
- Lauren Dubois
- Robert Eberschlag
- Meera Estrada
- Doug Fisher
- Rabia Gauri
- Dr. David Gold
- Ayesha Gonsalves
- Adriana Gorejko
- Leanne Herbert
- Kim Hunter
- Derek Husser
- Honourable Hal Jackman
- Dragana Javorina
- Tina Jesso
- Dr. Ervin Johnson
- Dr. Sonika Kainth
- Nigel Kennedy
- Dr. Elizabeth Kerr
- RM Kitchen
- Dr. Dilip Koshy
- Beryl Larose
- David Lewis Strauch
- Dr. Shanna Lindsay
- Steve Lynette
- Kareen Madian
- David Mapledoram
- Jamal Marsman
- Amin Massoudi
- Nancy McCain & Bill Morneau
- MPP Mary Margaret McMahon
- Heather McDonald
- Julia Miller Black
- Natalie Miyake
- Wendy Morris
- Jaklynn Nimec
- Robert Noroha
- Martha O'Driscoll
- Leah Ormsby
- Nadine Orr
- Irati Otamendi

- Heather Perl
- Josh Phillips
- Lorraine Rotz
- Steven Salguero
- Brenna Schmitt
- Richard Scott
- Rehan Shaikh
- Adam Shapiro
- Dr. Lauren Sham
- Rohit Sharma
- Daniel Shehori
- Michael Smith
- Jackie Spicer
- David Suthern
- Stephanie Tait
- Kerrian Tingling
- John Tory
- Warren Toz
- Taufik Valiante
- Adam Weinmann
- David Wolf
- Sara Woodhouse



Grants & Foundations

- Blue Lupin
- Canada Summer Jobs
- City of Toronto Cultural Festival Funding Program
- City of Toronto, Community Service Partnerships
- Courtney Fund
- Government of Canada - Youth Employment and Skills Strategy
- Government of Ontario, Enabling Change
- Mackenzie Charitable Foundation
- Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- Mauro Family Fund
- Ontario Brain Institute
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- Ontario Employment Assistance Services
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Pollock Family Foundation
- Sherry and Sean Bourne Family Foundation
- WCG International Consultants Ltd.
- United Way





Epilepsy Toronto Staff

- **Katie Armstrong**

Director of Children & Youth Services

- **Geoff Bobb**

Executive Director

- **Michelle Edmunds**

Workforce Development Specialist

- **Elana Ellison**

Children & Youth Services, Coordinator

- **Jamie Everitt**

*Functional Seizure Program
Coordinator*

- **Brandon Fairley**

*Director of Development - Individual &
Corporate Gifts*

- **Lucia Gustave**

Communications Specialist

- **Noura Hamade**

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Lead

- **Carter Hammett**

Employment Services Manager

- **Danielle Hidber**

Facilitator of Lifeskills

- **Joanna Kapusta**

Office Manager

- **Juhaina Moustapha**

Youth Employment Project Coordinator

- **Mackenzie Muldoon**

Director of Communications

- **Nicole Nelson**

*Director of Development - Grants &
Foundations*

- **Eden Peters**

Children & Youth Services, Coordinator

- **Sonia Peterson**

Adult Services Counsellor

- **Jesse Preston**

Employment Specialist

- **Anchugan Sivagnanam**

*SeizeABILITY! Program Manager &
Social Worker, Adult Services*

- **Rosalee (Rosie) Smith**

Director of Adult Services

- **John Spataro**

Recreation Manager

- **Leah Sultan-Khan**

*Director of Community
Engagement, Public Education &
Life Skills Training*

- **Bonnie Taylor**

Manager, Special Events

Teaching Awareness Through Puppetry Co-Directors

- **Biljana Karadzi**

- **Kirsten Sixt**

- **Mary Sword**

Board of Directors

- **Ian Brunton**

- **David Christie**

- **Sharon Chui**

- **Marianne Cizmar**

- **Tracy Day**

- **Bryan Frois**

- **Leah Goldband**

- **Franca Gulotta**

- **Emily Hillstrom**

- **Ian Morfitt**

- **Wende Rapson** *Secretary*

- **Dan Ruch**

- **Arvind Subramanian**

- **Daryl Yeo** *President*



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