

# ANNUAL REPORT

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford

2024 - 2025



# MESSAGE FROM THE Board of Directors Chair

## **Message from the DASO Board of Directors**

As we continue to advance the goals of our Strategic Plan, we continue to build new and renewed partnerships with community organizations in Oxford County. These collaborations enhance our profile but also empower the women and children who rely on the services of Domestic Abuse Services of Oxford.

## **Board Initiatives**

We continue to maintain and update board policies and procedures, as required, as well as carrying out our duties as a governance Board. Due to the resignations of several Board members in 2024/25, we have invited 4 applicants to become members. This will bring the Board number back to 11 active members, and this seems to be a good balance. Our policy does state our Board is to have between 8 and 12 members.

## **Programs & Staff**

Sophie Foster continues to do an amazing job fundraising and we thank her for all her hard work and great ideas; Soup Stock was again a resounding success. We would also like to formally welcome our new Executive Director, Ashley Brown. Ashley, we are looking forward to working with you. We appreciate the passion you have for the women and children of DASO and Ingamo and wish you all the best and all our support.

The Board of Directors would like to thank all the staff for the hard and challenging work they do each and every day. It is appreciated by our women and children, but also by management and the Board of Directors. Even though we are a governance Board, we appreciate and support every single staff member and all your efforts to keep the programs working and successful.

## **Gratitude and Farewells**

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all Board members for their support and hard work over the past year. During this year we have bid farewell to 3 amazing Board members, Sheri Vindasius, vice chair; Courtney Strickler, board treasurer; Alannah Robinson-Stott, Board member. I extend my personal thanks to each of the retiring board members as well as a thank you from the entire Board.

We also bid farewell to Diane Harris who has been an amazing voice for women and children of Oxford County. Diane led Ingamo for 35 years and has been the joint ED for Ingamo and DASO for the past 5 years. We thank Diane for everything she has done for Ingamo, DASO, the entire VAW sector and most of all, the women and children's lives that she has touched over her career. THANK YOU SO MUCH DIANE.

With warm regards,  
Pat Coad  
Chair, Board of Directors

## MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

In December 2024, I graciously stepped into the role of Executive Director with Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO), a 50-year-old organization that is deeply committed to ending gender-based violence in all its incarnations. This past year has been a time of significant change for DASO, as we said goodbye to my predecessor, Diane Harris, an incredible and compassionate leader, along with other leadership and staff members who had committed themselves to this crucial work. DASO also welcomed many new faces to the organization, team members who have picked up the baton in the relay race, as we all work together, unified in our efforts to support individuals and their children in safety, stability, and hope. I am so heartened to experience and witness the dedication of DASO's staff, volunteers, board, and community members; without these wonderful people DASO would not exist as it does today. Please accept my sincerest gratitude to all of you, you make this work possible and bring strength, playfulness and integrity to a sector and a service that is incredibly, incredibly challenging.

In 2024, DASO's shelter services provided space to 107 adults and children who were seeking safety from violence and in need of resources to move forward in their lives. Of these 107 individuals, 60 were female-identified adults and 47 were co-ed infants, children, and youth. As we consider these numbers and those who were able to access DASO services, we must also consider that just as many women and children were also turned away from service due to issues of capacity (117). This gap is significant and must be highlighted. Like most gender-based violence services, DASO is chronically underfunded and has a capacity of 7 rooms for single adult women and/or women-led families.

Often, intimate partner violence and gender-based violence more broadly is diminished as an issue or understood as not prevalent within our communities. In 2024, DASO received 565 crisis calls and turned away 117 people, these numbers speak volumes and tell us that gender-based violence is an issue in our community. These numbers also fail to capture the number of individuals and families experiencing violence who are also living in isolation across Oxford County and, for various reasons, are unaware or unable to connect with our services. There is so much work to be done and as we move forward into the coming year, our hope is to continue to strengthen our partnerships as well as DASO's service delivery model to capture as many women and children as possible so they are not missed and can access our services whether they are shelter, outreach, or family support. DASO's programming and services relies heavily on donations and the generosity of our community, and we are so thankful for all the donations we have received that support us in aiding individuals and children. The donations we receive keep these programs alive and without you, DASO would not be possible. Thank you for your generosity, support and commitment to ending gender-based violence.

Sincerely,  
Ashley Brown  
Executive Director





## OUR VISION

A world with gender equity for all.

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## OUR MISSION

To provide effective, efficient, and accountable services for women and their children impacted by abuse in Oxford County.



## Our Strategic Priorities for 2023-26

1

**Maximizing Impact Together:** Leverage community partnerships and collaboration to build capacity, increase access and eliminate barriers.

2

**Fostering a Culture of Success:** Strengthen culture, capacity and EDIB through staff engagement, training, and accountability.

3

**Empowering Women:** Enhance and expand services to meet the complex, changing and emerging needs of all women and the community.

4

**Stronger Together:** Increase awareness, advocacy, and education of violence against women by meaningfully engaging with the community.



# ANNUAL STATISTICS

**60**

Women called  
DASO their home

**565**

Crisis Calls

**47**

Children called  
DASO their home

Overall, two-thirds (67%) of LGB+ women who had ever been in an intimate partner relationship had experienced at least one type of IPV since the age of 15—significantly more than among heterosexual women (44%) \*

Three in ten (29%) women 15 to 24 years of age reported having experienced at least one incident of IPV \*

Women living in rural areas of the provinces of Canada experienced rates of intimate partner violence that were almost twice as high as women living in urban areas \*

*\*information taken from Government of Canada, 2022*

**947**

Phone interactions

**2,521**

Nights of safety provided  
across 17 shelter beds

**117**

Women turned away  
due to capacity

**150**

Women accessed  
Outreach Support

**51**

Women accessed  
Legal Support

**19**

Women accessed  
Group Programming

MESSAGE FROM

# Manager of Shelter Operations

Since stepping into this role in July 2024, I have been continually inspired by the dedication and deep commitment of our staff team to serving survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). I am equally in awe of the support our community continues to provide. As the only GBV emergency shelter in Oxford County, DASO plays a vital role—and that work is only possible because of the trust, collaboration, and engagement of those around us.

Over the past year, we have focused our efforts on aligning service delivery with evidence-based best practices, cultivating a culture of trauma-informed and Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppressive Practice, and strengthening community partnerships.

## **Evidence-Based Best Practices**

In our ongoing efforts to align service delivery with the best available evidence, we began transitioning to the B-SAFER assessment tool in the Fall of 2024. B-SAFER is a validated, evidence-based tool specifically designed for domestic violence contexts and supported by a wealth of research. Several staff completed the training in the Fall and we are targeting full staff training by July 2025. This transition enhances not only our ability to assess and respond to risk, but it also enhances our service effectiveness and professional credibility.

Another focus area has been strengthening our integration of trauma-informed principles throughout service delivery. This includes reframing how we understand substance use and mental health challenges among those accessing our services—not as barriers to service, but as common and expected trauma responses. Research shows that women who experience intimate partner violence are at significantly higher risk of developing PTSD, depression, and substance use disorders (WHO, 2021; BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, 2018). Our services must acknowledge these complex realities with empathy, flexibility, and evidence-informed responses.

## **Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Culture**

In December 2024, all full-time and several part-time staff completed a five-day intensive training facilitated by Krystal Snider of Collaborative Community Solutions. This highly interactive training provided staff with practical skills in trauma-informed, feminist, and anti-oppressive shelter practices, with a strong focus on harm reduction and supporting survivors with complex needs. We have also created new onboarding and training processes, incorporating training modules on these topics for new staff.

## MESSAGE FROM

# Manager of Shelter Operations

### Community Partnerships

We have invested in building stronger, more connected relationships with local organizations. Highlights from this year include:

- Participated in the Ingamo Amazing Race event, enhancing visibility and solidarity with our sister organization in the GBV sector of Oxford County;
- Attended an IPV & LGBTQIA+ Training event for Oxford County providers, deepening our intersectional practice;
- Engaged in a shelter tour of Optimism Place in Stratford, with multiple DASO staff attending to learn from their model and exchange ideas;
- Welcomed community partners to DASO team meetings, including representatives from Women's Employment Resource Centre (WERC), Oxford Sexual Assault Services (OSAS), Victim Assistance Services Oxford County (VASOC), Children's Aid Society (CAS), and Southwest Public Health. These visits helped build inter-agency relationships and strengthen our staff's understanding of community resources.

We also continue to participate in cross-sector initiatives such as the MARAM Table, Oxford Situation Table, and Domestic Abuse Resource Team (DART Oxford). These efforts are helping to break down silos, foster mutual understanding, and improve referral pathways and service coordination across Oxford County.

### Looking Ahead

We are proud of the progress made in 2024 and look forward to building on this foundation in the year ahead. Our commitment to trauma-informed, inclusive, and evidence-based service delivery remains unwavering. A heartfelt thank you to our staff, partners, and supporters for continuing to walk alongside us in this essential and life-saving work!

Eden Foster-Martin  
Manager of Shelter Operations



#### References:

- BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. (2018). *Substance Use and Women: An Overview of Current Research and Recommendations*.
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018*.
- Ponio, P., Varcoe, C., & Smutylo, T. (2016). *Trauma-informed approaches in housing and homelessness settings*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.





# Programs & Services

## 24/7 CRISIS LINE

The 24/7 crisis/help line is available to individuals in Oxford County who are in crisis or who need help, support and information about any issue involving gender-based violence. It is also open to anyone in the community who has questions about abuse or is concerned about a friend, family member, neighbour or co-worker.

## RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM (EMERGENCY SHELTER)

Our Residential Program provides safe, secure shelter for individuals who identify as women (with or without children) impacted by gender-based violence. Our 17-bed shelter is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Service users receive personalized support, safety planning, information, and referrals, with services tailored to meet their individual needs.

## KITCHEN PROGRAM

Since its launch in 2020, the Kitchen Program has remained a vital part of life at DASO, providing nutritious meals, school lunches, and snacks to women and children in shelter. It's more than just food — it's a source of comfort, connection, and care. The kitchen continues to be a gathering place where holidays, milestones, and cultural traditions are celebrated. Our Kitchen Team makes the most of generous community donations, using gifted ingredients to prepare balanced, home-style meals that reflect the kindness and support of those around us. Food literacy and life skills remain a key part of the program as well, helping individuals build confidence and independence.

## FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Family Support Program is holistic, trauma-informed program designed to support women and children who have experienced domestic, or intimate partner violence. The Family Support Program provides integrated support services that promote safety, healing, and empowerment for women and children fleeing violence. The Family Support Worker (FSW) provides safety planning, case management, parenting support and child development resources, respite, childcare, PEACE Program (community-based program for mothers and children who have experienced violence), therapeutic and recreational activities for children and their mother's, as well as teaching life skills. The FSW provides emotional support to the mothers and children who access our services. The Family Support Program remains a cornerstone of our shelter's mission, offering critical services that help survivors rebuild their lives. In 2024/2025, DASO's Family Support Program provided service to 40 female-identified adults and 36 dependents.



# Programs & Services



## **FAMILY COURT SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Court support services are offered collaboratively by DASO, Ingamo Homes, Family Violence Counselling Program and Victim Services of Oxford County. Court Support staff at DASO work with existing services for victims of domestic violence to ensure clients have access to the supports they need at every stage of the family court process. This service will facilitate the client's understanding and navigation of the family court system.

## **OUTREACH PROGRAM**

During the past fiscal year, DASO's Outreach Programs provided support to 150 service users.

The Intake Coordinator position continued to support DASO's Outreach Programs. The position supported service users in identifying their needs and goals, assessing and managing risk, facilitating referrals to internal and external services, and providing brief case management and system navigation. Due to the continued demand for outreach services, this position allowed service users to experience improved access to support through reduced wait times and continuity of care.

In accessing the Transitional Resource Program, service users received practical support in creating individualized plans to transition out of abusive situations. The program offered support in applying to income and housing options; providing ongoing risk management and safety planning; appointment accompaniment, and support in completing forms and documents. By also providing Family Court Support, service users found empowerment in receiving information, guidance, advocacy, and referrals as they navigate the legal system. DASO continues to see an increased demand for legal support due to lack of lawyers accepting Legal Aid Ontario certificates in Oxford County, as well as a growing complexity of needs as survivors simultaneously navigate family, criminal, and/or immigration systems.

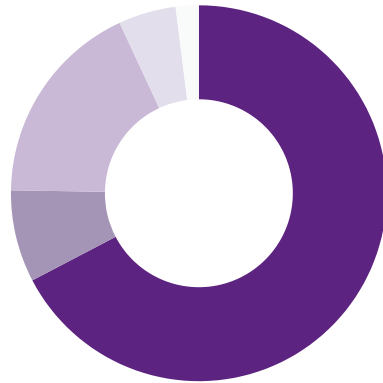
The Outreach Program staff participate in community collaboration and response by acting as DASO's representatives on Oxford County's Situation Table as well as the By-Name List and Coordinated Access Team. In March 2025, a community-based Trauma-Informed Yoga Group was introduced in partnership by DASO, Oxford County Community Health Centre, and Ingamo Homes. Designed to support women who have experienced trauma, the group focuses on promoting safety and trust in the body through breath work and somatic experiencing. DASO's Outreach Program staff assist in coordinating and co-facilitating the weekly yoga sessions.



# ANNUAL FINANCE REPORT

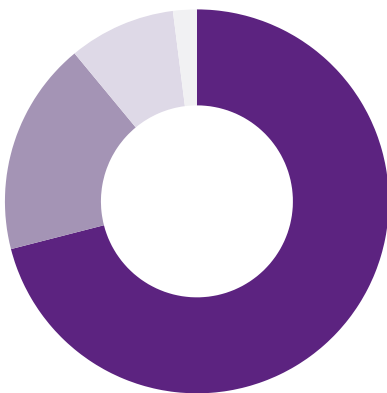
## REVENUE

68%	<b>Community &amp; Social Services</b> \$1,157,337
8%	<b>Grants</b> \$129,126
18%	<b>Fundraising</b> \$309,540
5%	<b>County of Oxford</b> \$77,454
2%	<b>Other Funds</b> \$41,099



**Total Revenue: \$1,714,556**

## EXPENSES



71%	<b>Residential Program</b> \$1,163,518
18%	<b>Community Based Programs</b> \$300,087
9%	<b>Housing</b> \$143,394
2%	<b>Fundraising</b> \$29,505

**Total Expenses: \$1,636,504**

*Our 2024/25 Audited Financial Statements are available on our website at [www.daso.ca](http://www.daso.ca) or by contacting our office at 519-539-7488 x238; [anne@daso.ca](mailto:anne@daso.ca)*



## Board of Directors

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**Pat Coad**  
Chair

**Amy Canlas**  
Vice Chair

**Sher Vindasius**  
Former Vice Chair

**Courtney Strickler**  
Former Treasurer

**Kristen Doyle**  
Secretary

**Leah Robinson**  
Board Member

**Deb Almost**  
Board Member

**Lacey Clarke**  
Board Member

**Alannah  
Robinson-Stott**  
Former Board Member

## Management Team

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**Ashley Brown**  
Executive Director

**Diane Harris**  
Former Executive Director

**Eden Foster-Martin**  
Manager of Shelter Operations

**Samantha Ton**  
Administration & Communications Manager

**Anne Wismer**  
Contracted Financial Manager

**Jaime-lyn Thorne**  
Kitchen Manager

## Staff Team

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Amanda D

Natasha M

Rachel H

Sarah R

Sarah K

Melissa S

Cinnamon B

Jennilee M

Lorraine M

Kaitlyn C

Munazza A

Amanda R

Alisha R

Amal M

Anu J

Ana Maria Z

Ruth N

Hannah B

# THANK YOU

FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Thank you to all of our generous donors—both named and anonymous—for your vital support. Your contributions make it possible for DASO to continue providing essential programs & services in Oxford County. We truly couldn't do it without you.



[www.daso.ca/donate](http://www.daso.ca/donate)