



Working Together to Create Healthy Communities

**Wellkin Child & Youth Mental Wellness
Strategic Plan: 2021-2024**



Acknowledgements

The development of Wellkin's 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, *Working Together to Create Healthy Communities*, has been a community effort.

We would like to thank our staff for their thoughtful insights and innovative ideas. Your contributions and recommendations have set the foundation and direction for our future.

Thank you to our partners, funders, and community members who have been and will continue to be allies in this work. We look forward to our continued collaboration.

Our sincerest gratitude to the infants, children, youth, and families with lived or living experience¹ who shared their knowledge and expertise with us. You have inspired us to set a bold plan for our future.

¹ Lived or living experience refers to having personal experience with mental health challenges and/or addictions.

Leadership Message

We are pleased to share with you the Wellkin 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. It is a bold and ambitious plan to achieve our vision of healthy communities for infants, children, youth, and families.

In 2018, we set out to achieve five strategic priorities. We challenged ourselves to work in new and different ways to improve our *operational effectiveness*. We focused our efforts on *client and funder satisfaction* and improved the quality of our services. We strengthened our *governing ability* by navigating resource pressures and uncertainty in the midst of a new government. We sought out *innovation opportunities* with a new name and new brand. We worked together to define and build our *culture*. The momentum we have built through these efforts has set a strong foundation for this strategic plan.

Over the past several months, we have reflected on our past, adapted to a rapidly evolving environment, and set focused intentions for our future. In developing this strategic plan, our team, Board, clients, funders, partners, and community shared their stories, ideas, insights, and big, bold goals for our future. We also reviewed recent research, data, and best practices. We considered emerging community needs, trends, and municipal, provincial, and federal directions.

We heard that infants, children, youth, and families are struggling with mental health and wellness. Waitlists, difficulty navigating the system of services, discrimination, racism, and inequity continue to be barriers to accessing quality service. We heard the importance of being strong leaders in our community, collaborating with our partners, and responding creatively and proactively to the evolving and unique needs of the individuals, families, and community we serve.

Our strategic plan is a culmination of what we heard and what we learned from our community. Fueled by a committed staff and Board team, we will work towards five strategic priorities: *Clinical Excellence, Service Excellence, Operational Excellence, Systems, and Equity and Systemic Racism*.

**This strategic plan is our commitment to our community.
It emboldens us to do our best each and every day.**

Wellkin Leadership Team & Board of Directors

Who We Are

Overview

Wellkin (formerly OECYC) delivers family mental health care with a focus on infants, children, youth, and families living in Oxford and Elgin counties. Our programs and services support the needs of each individual, while the agency maintains a well-rounded approach that includes screening, assessment, treatment, and education. The supports and services have no costs attached.

We aim to engage and support families/ caregivers and peers in delivering care to infants, children, and youth while being responsive to their unique life and family circumstances. Our intention is that everyone accessing our services will achieve stability through active participation in treatment plans designed to address safe, healthy, and manageable outcomes.

Vision

Healthy communities for infants, children, youth, and families.

Mission

Wellkin strengthens the mental health and wellness of infants, children, youth, and families by delivering a continuum of quality services.

Values

- Adaptability
- Excellence
- Collaboration
- Advocacy
- Equity

Reflecting on Our Past

2018-2020 by the Numbers

3,330+

client visits to our Walk-In Counselling program.

595+

clients were supported through non walk-in counselling programs.

925+

clients participated in Child and Youth Mental Health group programs.

210+

clients were supported through psychiatry services.

180+

parents/caregivers participated in our parent group programs.

110+

clients were assisted through our Intensive Services programs.

35

youth participated as members of our Youth Engagement Advisory Committee.

9%

base funding increase.²

200%

increase in funding and donations.³

592

Board of Director volunteer hours.

1,573

social media followers.

² This represents an additional \$331,443.

³ This represents an additional \$45,733.

Adapting to Our Present

Our Current Context

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the global outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic has been challenging for infants, children, youth, and families, especially those who struggle with mental health.

According to a Children's Mental Health Ontario study, 59% of parents have noted recent behavioural changes in their children. Social isolation, removal from school and daily routines, as well as isolation and loss associated with illness are some of the top stressors children are experiencing.

In a survey conducted in the early days of the pandemic, nearly two-thirds of youth said that their mental health had gotten worse since the pandemic. Over 60% of youth reported feeling a combination of worried, upset, sad, and angry about the abrupt end to the school year, inability to see their friends, and uncertainty about the future.

Some children and youth are especially vulnerable to mental health issues, particularly those with pre-existing mental illness, complex support needs, or those who have undiagnosed mental health concerns. Children and youth have personally been affected by COVID-19 through illness or loss. Those living in low-income or racialized communities are also vulnerable.⁴

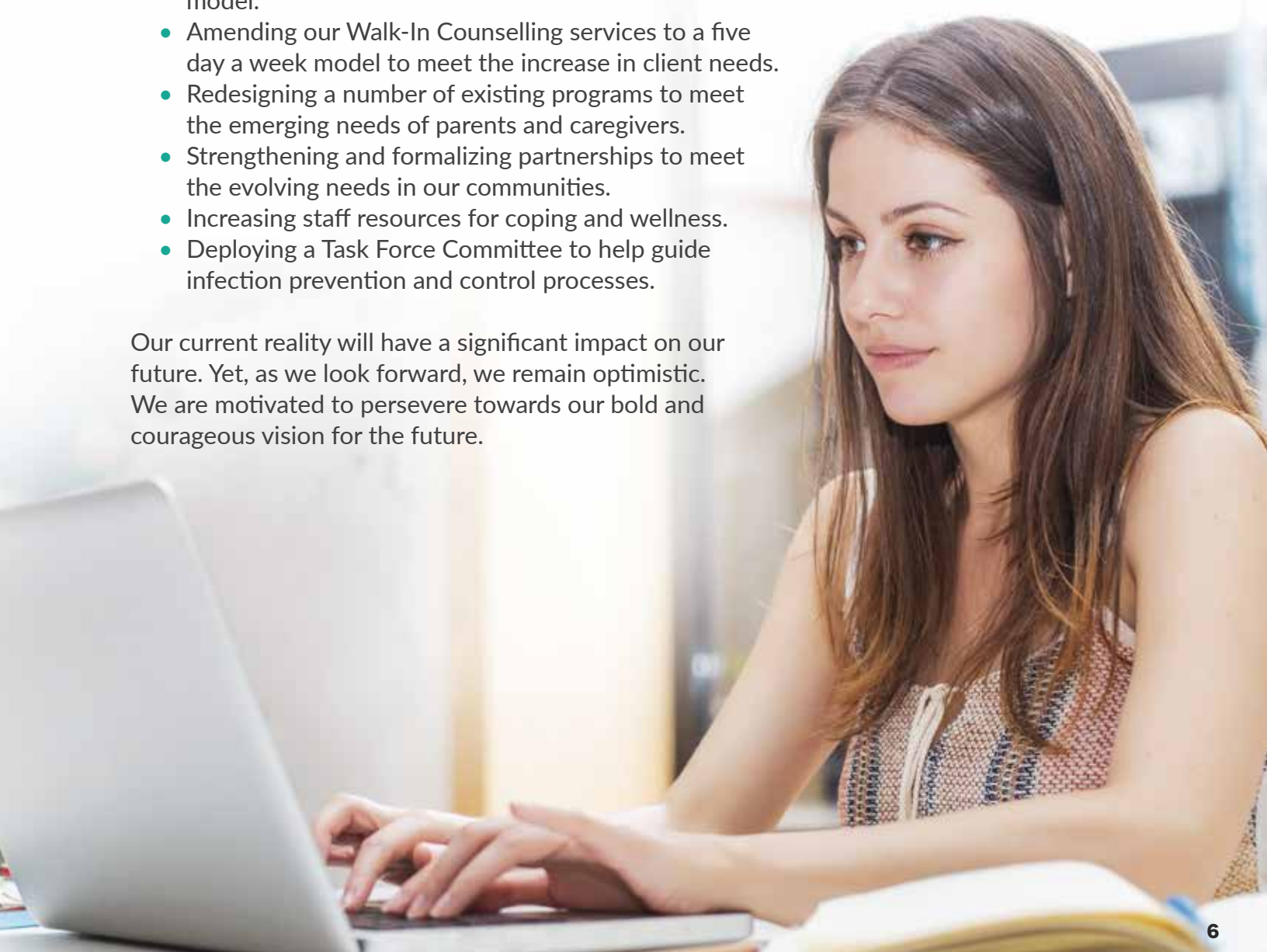
⁴ <https://cmho.org/how-the-pandemic-impacts-childens-mental-health/>

How We Are Responding

We implemented rapid changes to systems and services to maintain the health and safety of our staff and clients, including:

- Transitioning all client programs to include virtual options.
- Engaging in training to meet client needs effectively in a virtual service delivery format.
- Adapting the launch of our new Youth Hub to a virtual model.
- Amending our Walk-In Counselling services to a five day a week model to meet the increase in client needs.
- Redesigning a number of existing programs to meet the emerging needs of parents and caregivers.
- Strengthening and formalizing partnerships to meet the evolving needs in our communities.
- Increasing staff resources for coping and wellness.
- Deploying a Task Force Committee to help guide infection prevention and control processes.

Our current reality will have a significant impact on our future. Yet, as we look forward, we remain optimistic. We are motivated to persevere towards our bold and courageous vision for the future.



Focusing on Our Future

Wellkin's role in the health care system is to strengthen the mental health and wellness of infants, children, youth, and families. As we move forward over the next three years, we will have a dual focus – enhancing what we do within our own organization and leading change within a complex system.

The successful realization of our plan will see infants, children, youth, and families move seamlessly within our own organization and across the continuum of care, receiving the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Over the next few years, we expect increased needs and demands due to changes with respect to the pandemic, technology, and stigma. Each of these will impact our work in a different way. We also anticipate a greater expectation of quality care, accountability, and transparency from those we serve. Changing demographics and migration from larger cities will also influence our work.

Our strategic priorities are structured to address future challenges and opportunities. Through *clinical excellence*, we will strengthen our ability to meet the evolving needs of our community. A focus on *service excellence* will ensure a consistent, seamless, and positive experience accessing care.

By working towards *operational excellence*, we will enhance our ability to deliver on our mission. Our work on our *systems* priority will result in a more connected and integrated system of care. Finally, our commitment to addressing *equity and systemic racism* will improve health equity for our most vulnerable and marginalized community members.

Our Roadmap for the Future



Clinical Excellence:

Exceptional mental wellness outcomes for infants, children, youth, and families.



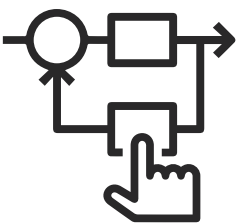
Service Excellence:

Excellent service experiences that address the unique needs of infants, children, youth, and families.



Operational Excellence:

A healthy, high performing organization that delivers on its mission.



Systems:

A comprehensive, integrated system of care that delivers highly coordinated mental health and addictions services for infants, children, youth, and families.



Equity & Systemic Racism:

An agency and community where equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded, promoted, and celebrated to reduce health inequity.



Clinical Excellence

Goal

Exceptional mental wellness outcomes for infants, children, youth, and families.

Strategies

1. Use research and evidence to advance treatment approaches and services.
2. Embed a culture of continuous quality improvement through the use of evidence-informed methodologies.
3. Strengthen clinical competency and capacity to meet evolving client and community needs.
4. Integrate an evaluative approach to measure our impact across all of our services.

Wellkin is committed to clinical excellence. Over the past few years, we have diligently worked to develop the people, skills, conditions, and systems that enable continuous quality improvement.

Moving forward, we will continue to use an evidence-informed lens as a cornerstone to guide the development and implementation of quality clinical programs and services. Core to achieving clinical excellence will be the integration of consistent, incremental improvements in quality.

Our dedicated team is our greatest strength. As our community's needs evolve, we will invest in enhancing our team's skills, knowledge, and capacity to meet those needs. We will also use new and innovative data analysis and reporting tools to support evidence-informed quality improvement.

We understand the importance of being able to deliver quality care under even the most challenging circumstances. We will learn from our experiences to advance towards our priority of clinical excellence.



Service Excellence

Goal

Excellent service experiences that address the unique needs of infants, children, youth, and families.

Strategies

1. Improve equitable and timely access to care.
2. Expand service delivery models to provide the right service, at the right time, and in the right place.
3. Optimize the quality and experience of care through data-driven decision-making.
4. Create a seamless client experience across and beyond the organization.

Equitable health care access means affordable, high quality, and culturally and linguistically appropriate care is available in a timely manner, including both preventative care and crisis supports. We will embrace new methods, policies, and practices to address equitable and timely access to care at Wellkin.

We will investigate and integrate new models of care that harness the full potential of digital tools and evidence-informed best practices to meet the current and evolving needs of the community. In our current climate, it is critical that clients be able to access the services they need, when and where they need them.

Data analytics and improved information management provide new and emerging opportunities to provide safe and reliable care. We will leverage innovation and technology to provide accurate, relevant, and actionable insights through an increasingly data-driven model of care. We will be leaders in the use of data for quality improvement, research, and decision-making to deliver a consistent, quality client experience.

Infants, children, youth, and families should expect the best care at what is a difficult and stressful time in their life. We will create easy-to-navigate pathways of care across Wellkin. We will use what we learn to build connected pathways with our care partners, improving the service experience across the continuum of care.



Operational Excellence

Goal

A healthy, high performing organization that delivers on its mission.

Strategies

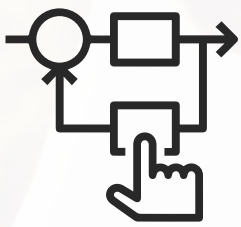
1. Be a leader in shaping new funding and care models, maximizing existing funding envelopes, and diversifying funding streams.
2. Create a culture of high performing teams, learning, continuous improvement, and growth.
3. Be a sought after employer known for supporting healthy, empowered people and teams.
4. Embed stakeholder engagement as a core principle in everything we do.

As we plan for our future, our success is closely tied to our financial performance. To achieve the goals we have set out in this strategic plan, we require enhanced financial resources. We will explore new, strategic funding opportunities and advocate for increased financial investment from municipal, provincial, and federal sources.

Across all levels of the organization, we will embrace and advance a culture and mindset of continuous learning, transparency, and respect. We will hold ourselves and each other accountable to the highest standards of care, quality, and service.

We will create a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace. The ideas, talent, perspectives, and experiences of all staff are critical to the achievement of positive outcomes for infants, children, youth, and families.

Evidence demonstrates that meaningfully engaging individuals with lived and living experience can have significant, positive impacts on service experience and outcomes. We will actively involve and include the voices of individuals with lived and living experience as we plan, deliver, and evaluate our services and programs.



Systems

Goal

A comprehensive, integrated system of care that delivers highly coordinated mental health and addictions services for infants, children, youth, and families.

Strategies

1. Be leaders in advocating for and driving system change in mental health and addictions.
2. Create seamless pathways across the entire continuum of care.
3. Implement coordinated access to mental health and addictions services and supports.
4. Strengthen our partnerships to create a connected system of care to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Being a driver of system change means challenging the status quo, exploring opportunities for system innovation, and building meaningful partnerships across sectors that support continuity of care. By fostering and maintaining a coordinated system of services, we will strive to ensure no infant, child, youth, or family is without access to the care and supports they need.

Creating an integrated system of care is a collaborative effort. We are dedicated to working closely with our partners and other service providers to strengthen communication, share insights and information, remove barriers to access, and respond to the needs of our community.

Navigation of services should be easy for families and service providers, with clear, coordinated pathways to and through services that address needs across the lifespan. We believe that by building and expanding on existing pathways to support, we can strengthen the system of mental health and addictions services so that all infants, children, youth, and families are able to easily access the right supports when they need them, where they need them, and in a way that meets their needs.



Equity & Systemic Racism

Goal

An agency and community where equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are embedded, promoted, and celebrated to reduce health inequity.

Strategies

1. Cultivate a shared responsibility for EDI across our organization.
2. Apply an EDI perspective strategically to make evidence-informed decisions.
3. Embed a culturally responsive approach to enhance EDI outcomes within our organization and across the system.
4. Work with partners in a collaborative care model to decrease system-wide EDI gaps.
5. Engage people with lived and living experience to ensure our work is meaningful, accountable, and impactful.

We believe that everyone has the right to quality care. We recognize that we have a responsibility to better understand and address social, economic, and cultural inequities that prevent members of our community from accessing the care they need, and that we are part of the solution.

Embedding a culturally responsive approach within our organization and system is not a one-step journey. Addressing EDI involves intentionality and cultural transformation, and will require asking hard questions, seeking to understand, listening openly, and acting on what we learn.

As an organization, we will strive to meaningfully demonstrate the principles of EDI in all that we do, create an inclusive workplace, and build a team that is representative of the community we serve. We are committed to engaging and learning from people with lived and living experience, developing a better understanding of the unique barriers to access they face, and including marginalized voices in our decision-making processes.

We will also call on our partners, other service providers, and our government to engage in conversations about EDI and its impact on health outcomes, implement culturally responsive approaches and tools, and work collaboratively to reduce health inequity across our system.



Implementation Plan

Engaging in this strategic planning process has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on where we've been and where we want to go as an organization. This strategic plan outlines the priorities and strategic directions that will guide our work over the next three years.

To achieve our vision of healthy communities for infants, children, youth, and families, we must take action. This includes preparing an implementation plan that outlines expected results, key action steps, outcomes, and metrics that will help us measure our performance, maintain accountability to our community, and deliver on the strategies identified in our plan.

We are excited to begin this work, but we can't do it alone. We invite our partners, service providers, and the community to join us in strengthening mental health and wellness for infants, children, youth, and families.



**Working Together to Create
Healthy Communities**

