



CELEBRATING  
**40 Years**  
of Hope and Healing

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

# Letter from Simon Scott Board Chair

As I reflect on the extraordinary challenges created by COVID-19, I am very proud of the Discovery House team and their collective accomplishments. In addition to providing crucial support to 617 women and children fleeing domestic violence, we achieved strong financial performance and positioned the organization for continued impact and success with the appointment of a new Executive Director.

Our accomplishments reflect a true team effort. We are tremendously grateful for the support, adaptability, and resilience of our employees, funders and donors, partner agencies, research institutions, and volunteers, each of whom plays a vital role in enabling the work we do, and how we do it. The health, safety, and security of our staff and clients are fundamental to everything we do, and maintaining this through COVID-19 placed additional demands on the organization. The Discovery House team adapted quickly and embraced extensive new safety protocols to keep our clients and families safe. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank them for their unwavering dedication and selflessness.

To cope with the public health restrictions, our frontline staff had to be more creative than ever in supporting our clients. Based on the needs and preferences of the family, they provided support through text message, email, phone calls, and video conferencing. Food and necessities were dropped off when families were in isolation, as well as age-appropriate toys and games for the children. These toys help build attachment between parent and child and serve as a tool for child and youth engagement when meeting with our mental health clinicians and case managers. As you'll see in this report, these creative methods were well received by families and increased engagement with our teams. As always, we are humbled by the trust that our clients have in us and deeply thankful that we can safely serve them.

At the end of 2020, following an exhaustive search, we were delighted to appoint Leslie Hill as Executive Director. In addition to her passion for Discovery House and the domestic violence sector, Leslie brings a wealth of leadership experience. A natural team player, Leslie is well-positioned to

## Mission

**To end the traumatic cycle of domestic violence for women and children.**

## Vision

**Our communities are free of domestic violence.**

## Values

**Safety We provide safe spaces for women and their children to recover, discover and thrive.**

**Compassion We treat our clients and each other with kindness, empathy and care.**

**Excellence We are committed to best practice in our programs, operations, and governance.**

**Collaboration There is strength in numbers. We seek the contributions of other and share best practices with our community.**

**Urgency Our work saves lives. We advocate for the women and children we serve, and courageously pursue societal change to break the generational cycle of domestic violence.**

**“Discovery House is a wonderful place for my daughter and me. It’s a life that’s safe and has a lot of support. I’m working through a safety plan and building my mental and emotional strength so that I can survive with my daughter.”**

*Discovery House Client*



collaborate with our industry partners and galvanize the organization towards our goal of communities free of family violence.

As we continue to navigate the pandemic through 2021, Discovery House will remain focused on ensuring that our programs and services effectively meet the needs of the families who stay with us. Among our many priorities, we will re-invigorate our Indigenous programming, create efficiencies in our operations, improve collaboration, and ensure our evaluation tools best serve the needs of our clients.

Discovery House is about hope, and despite the uncertainties of last year, we remain hopeful of a transition back to normal through 2021. We look forward to another productive year and to making great strides toward our shared vision. On behalf of the Board, thank you for your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Scott".

---

## **2020-21 Board of Directors**

**Simon Scott**

**Bob MacDougall**

**Geri Greenall**

**Dr. Nicole Letourneau**

**Pamela Lawrence**

**Tim Moro**

**Susanne Huggard**

**Taylor Smith**

**Carli Tyson**

**Pamela Wicks**

**Joel Irwin**

**We thank our outgoing directors Joel Irwin, Tim Moro, and Geri Greenall for their many years of dedicated service.**

## Letter from Leslie Hill Executive Director

As this year draws to a close, I want to recognize that while 2020 was challenging in so many ways, it also showed how resilient and strong we are together. It has been humbling to see staff, volunteers, partners, and donors rise to the challenge of successfully navigating this new normal – but more so, the unwavering strength and courage of our families continually motivates me. Throughout the past year, our doors have remained open to women and their children fleeing domestic violence. We safely provided 617 people with safe housing and support during a critical time in their lives and during a pandemic that exponentially increased the complexity of issues they faced.

Eight years ago, I had the privilege of leading the Community Housing Program at Discovery House. The lasting impact of the programs in the lives of our families made it an easy and exciting decision to rejoin the organization this year as the Executive Director. While much has changed since then, the skill, unwavering passion, and creativity of this team and their dedication to the important work of ending domestic violence in our communities never ceases to amaze me.

2020 also marked our 40th anniversary. Over the course of these 40 years of service, Discovery House has helped and supported thousands of women and their children fleeing domestic violence, with the hope that one day our communities are free of violence. While we will continue to provide a haven to survivors, it is our ardent hope, as champions of the movement to end domestic violence, that no individual should ever have to fear violence or abuse.

I close the year with gratitude – thank you to the Discovery House team, volunteers, funders and donors, partner agencies, research institutions, and board of directors. I look forward to continuing working with all of you in 2021-22 and know that, together, we can break the cycle of domestic violence.



### 40 years of Hope and Healing

**Since opening our doors in 1980, Discovery House has served thousands of women and children fleeing domestic violence, helping them rebuild their lives. This would not have been possible without the women who worked and advocated for second-stage shelter space in Calgary 40 years ago.**

**We've come a long way since then, but there is still so much work to do before we can realize a community free of domestic violence. And together, we can achieve it. There is a lot that we have accomplished in the last 40 years – moments all made possible by people like you!**

# Discovery House

**1978**

A group of women, including the Catholic Women's League, are inspired to create a long-term shelter for mothers and children fleeing domestic violence in Calgary.

**1984**

Discovery House doubles capacity, relocating to a facility with 14 furnished apartments.

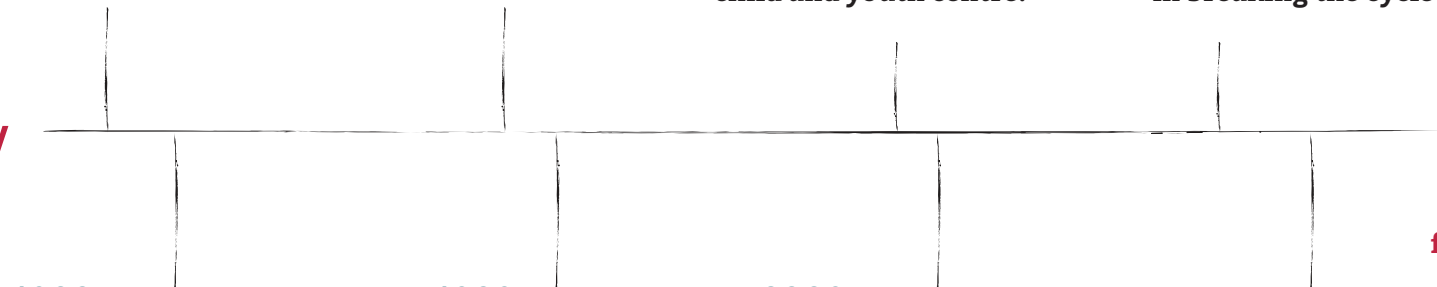
**2004**

Discovery House moves to its current home, a secure 19-unit building with shared community spaces: computer room, outdoor courtyard, library, and child and youth centre.

**2018**

Discovery House partners with Harvard University and the University of Calgary. Their research in early brain development and childhood intervention could play a key role in breaking the cycle of violence.

**OUR HISTORY**



**1980**

Discovery House opens up as Calgary's first long-term shelter for abused women. We are one of the first second stage shelters in Canada.

**1989**

Discovery House offers counseling to children who experience or witness violence in their families.

**2009**

Using the housing-first model, we help women find stable housing directly in the community through the new Community Housing Program.

**2020**

Discovery House celebrates its 40 years of service. We are recognized as a Top 100 Impact Charity by Charity Intelligence, and as one of Canada's best charities 2020: Top 100 by both Maclean's and MoneySense.

**OUR FUTURE**

**Communities free of domestic violence**

# The Impacts of COVID-19

The global pandemic in 2020-21 brought with it many challenges. The isolation measures required to combat COVID-19 have created barriers to seeking help from domestic violence. When women have finally been able to get the help they need, they have come to us with more severe and frequent abuse. Many organizations in the sector believe that current statistics only reflect a fraction of women experiencing domestic violence, and we are bracing ourselves for an influx in people seeking help once isolation measures lift.

**It is important, now more than ever, that we are here to serve them when they do.**



Staff in their PPE on Pink Shirt Day

From the beginning of the pandemic, it was clear we needed to focus on service continuity for the many women and children who rely on our shelter and programs for safety and recovery. Therefore, in March 2020, a pandemic committee was formed to ensure rapid responses to ever-changing protocols and streamline the information flow to staff, allowing us to continue to safely serve women and their children. This committee ensured appropriate PPE, workflow, and ensured the optimal number of staff onsite to ensure client needs were met while reducing the spread of COVID-19.

**The pandemic has created additional barriers and complexity for our families, and we know it is difficult to keep up with the ever-evolving pandemic information, especially while navigating a personal crisis. We ensured our families had accurate access to information about isolation protocols, school closures, and vaccines. Additionally, with the support of our community partner, The Alex, we were able to hold an onsite client vaccination clinic. We are proud of the commendation we have received from Public Health officials for our well thought-out and effective protocols to keep staff and clients safe.**

These protocols, enhanced training, and the dedication of staff and clients, have meant that there has been no transmission within the shelter to date.

## Harvest Table Project

In 2017, the concept of the Harvest Table was born. With the support of generous donors and partners, we are excited to announce that the renovation has now come to completion.

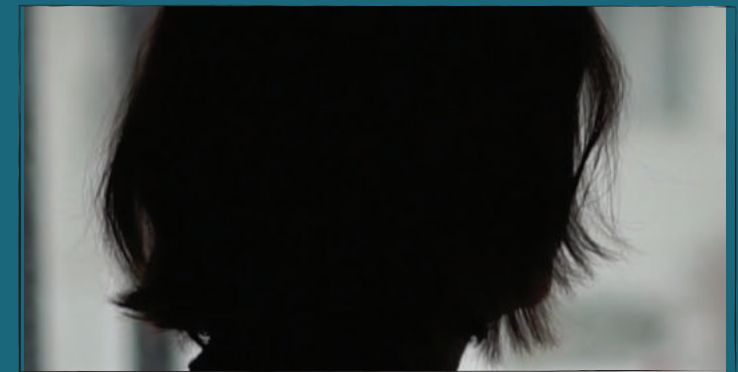
Located in the heart of the shelter, an under-utilized common room has been transformed into an open, safe, and warm space that facilitates socialization and creates a community for our mothers and children during a critical turning point in their lives. This space aims to address food insecurity and the adverse effects of trauma by bringing together survivors of domestic violence in a communal space where they can prepare nourishing meals while building healing connections.



BEFORE

AFTER

This project has been made possible thanks to funding from The Calgary Foundation, The Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown and P.E.A.R.L. Foundation. Our lead in-kind partner, [IN]SIDE]OUT[ DESIGN STUDIO, has designed the space and coordinated and executed the renovation. We thank the many other donors who contributed goods, services, and financial support to make this dream a reality. We look forward to the gatherings that will be held here once public health restrictions have lifted.



## Alison's Story

WE ARE HUMBLLED TO BE TRUSTED WITH THIS STORY AND GRATEFUL WE CAN SHARE THE IMPACT OF ALISON'S TIME AT DISCOVERY HOUSE WITH SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU.

“ The time I spent at Discovery House saved my life.

At first, it was hard - you've left your family, your friends, your community.

The staff at Discovery House were unbelievable - the help I got there, they were so supportive. Over time, it really became my safe place, and I truly believe being there saved my life.

Today, I have a wonderful life, a great partner, and a wonderful career. And I don't think about it anymore, it's behind me.

**There is hope for people who are in that situation: your life will and can get so much better.”**

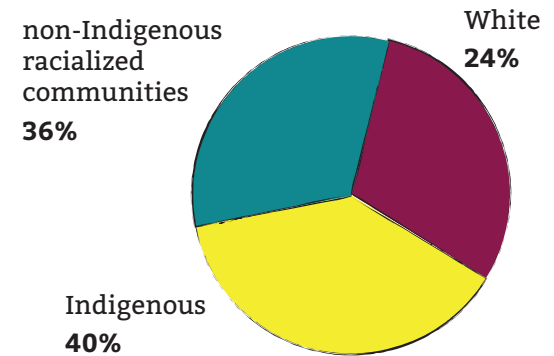
*Alison, Former Client*

WATCH THE FULL VIDEO HERE: <https://youtu.be/p0huXDm4Q4o>

# Client Engagement

Recognizing the need to ensure our clients remained connected through this year of self-isolation, our unwaveringly passionate team created creative opportunities to engage virtually for one-on-one and group programs. We provided laptops and equipment to families so they were able to virtually engage in Discovery House services and homeschooling. This increased client engagement in our programs, as demonstrated in the mental health and child & youth engagement numbers below. We also continue to offer face-to-face support when warranted. For example, our Child Development Centre remained open with additional precautions through the pandemic to provide much needed support to children and their mothers.

## Demographics



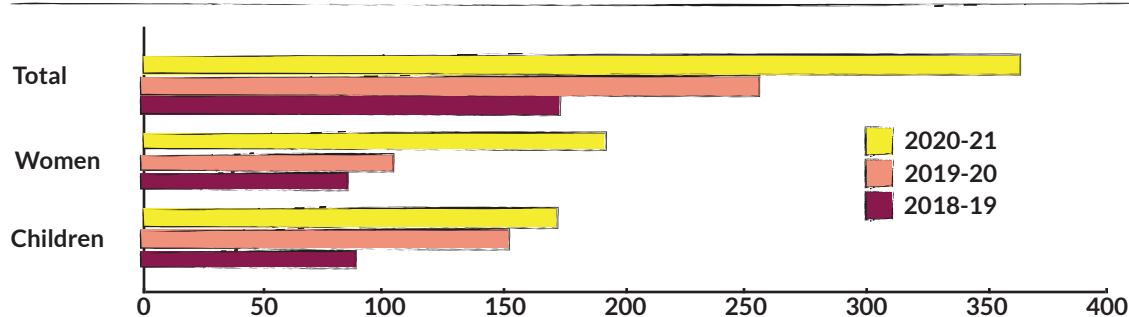
## Women and Children Served

Community*	2020-2021		2019-2020		2018-2019	
	Women	Children	Women	Children	Women	Children
Intensive Case Management	68	154	77	149	80	158
Adaptive Case Management	38	89	48	100	38	64
Shelter	43	96	51	104	35	73
Outreach	44	85	42	86	32	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>365</b>
	<b>617</b>		<b>657</b>		<b>550</b>	

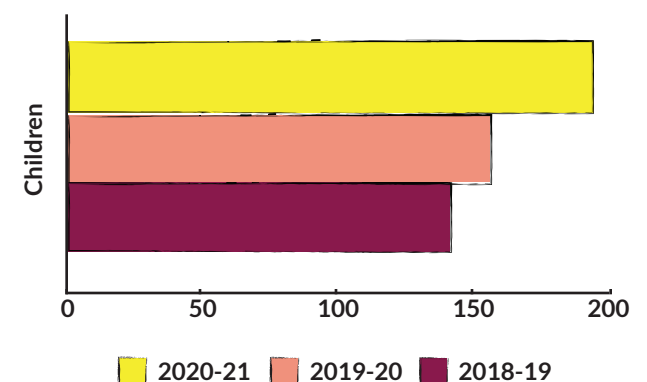
*\*ICM is an evidence-based, recovery-based approach using multi-disciplinary teams to help clients identify goals and support them to improve quality of life.*

*ACM clients can receive a maximum of 24 hours of case management in a month. If clients require more support than that, they are moved to intensive case management.*

## Clients Engaged with Mental Health Services



## Children Engaged with Child & Youth Services



## Upon Admission

Families come to us with complex, intersectional needs. Our wrap-around supports are here to help them address physical, emotional, psychological, financial, and developmental barriers as they rebuild their lives.

**60%** of women were at severe or extreme risk of homicide.

**97%** of families earned less than the low-income cut-off.

**92%** of women were unemployed.

**30%** of children aged 0-5 showed social or emotional development below age-appropriate scores.

**77%** of women reported emotional, psychological, and/or verbal abuse.

**66%** of women reported physical abuse.

**50%** of women reported financial abuse.

## Lives Changed

**60%** of women surveyed who engaged with a Mental Health Clinician improved their levels of depression, anxiety, and/or stress.

**33%** of youth in grades 4 to 9 surveyed became more resilient and better able to cope with challenges.

**3 out of 4** children aged 0-5 surveyed who engaged with the Mental Health and Child & Youth teams improved their skills in focus and ability to regulate their emotions.

**42%** of youth in grades 4 to 9 surveyed had improved self-esteem and confidence.



**75%** of children between the ages of 6-17 surveyed had improved emotional, social, and cognitive functioning.

### Financial Empowerment Programs

in partnership with United Way, Aspire, Carya, Bow Valley College, and Momentum

**66** women received financial coaching.

**182** women have a bank account.

**53** women opened an RESP.

**33** women found employment.

**Congratulations to the 70 women and 139 children who successfully transitioned from Discovery House programs to stable and independent housing!**

**100%** of families surveyed maintained independent and stable housing free from domestic violence at 3, 6, and 12 months after leaving our programs.

# Operations

This year, we have been busy undertaking many initiatives to create a safe, compassionate, respectful culture for clients and staff, to ensure a warm, welcoming experience for clients, and to become the most efficient organization we can be.

- All shelter suites received much-needed upgrades including new sofas and chairs and a mural at each entrance to brighten up the space.
- In partnership with Calgary Reads and Rotary Club of Calgary Downtown, a safe, welcoming, and enchanting reading nest was created to transport children into the world of books and increase early literacy.
- We launched an information technology transformation to enhance user experience and ensure greater security and confidentiality, especially while we navigate an ongoing need for a virtual workspace.
- All employees received Respect in The Workplace Training as part of our commitment to create a safe, compassionate, respectful organization for clients and staff alike.
- We also conducted a Culture Survey to obtain feedback from our staff on how our values are reflected in our culture. We are proud to report that 100% of staff who participated felt Discovery House ensures work-life balance, encourages mutual respect, and provides a safe work environment. Of staff who responded, 100% felt proud to be a part of Discovery House.



*The second and third floors of the shelter received large, new murals. The beautiful and inspiring murals serve as a reminder of hope for women and children.*

# Community Engagement

We highlighted our partnership with Inglewood Community Garden (ICG) through a series of videos. The garden donates 3000lbs of food annually to Discovery House – produce that is organic, nutritious, and grown with love and especially with the children in our care in mind. ICG is also a safe and welcoming space for the families in our care, our staff, and volunteers.

In November, we launched our first annual Food for Thought fundraising and awareness campaign with Calgary's other second stage shelters.

Aimee Bontje, Team Lead – Child and Youth Case Management, was selected to present at the 2021 IMPACT Summit about the innovative work being done in our Child Development Centre to help break the cycle of domestic violence.

We commemorated International Women's Day with a panel on the 'Shadow Pandemic', the surge in domestic violence during COVID-19. We thank the Calgary Public Library and the panelists who joined our Executive Director and Director of Community Relations to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on domestic violence: The Honourable Rajan Sawhney: Minister of Community and Social Services, Alberta; Kim Ruse: Co-Chair Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, CEO Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter; Cst. Cameron Sunderland: Calgary Police Services Stephanie Wright: 211 Alberta Manager

Thanks to all the donors who stepped up for our Annual December Gift of Hope campaign. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to receive the full \$75,000 match from the Auxilium Foundation! The campaign was such a success that the Auxilium Foundation has already signed on the match the donations for the December 2021 campaign.

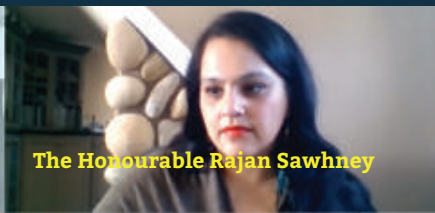
## Volunteers

Many programs were paused because of COVID-19, resulting in fewer active volunteers and hours. Despite that, in addition to our Board of Directors, 22 active volunteers contributed approximately 324 volunteer hours to make our life-changing work possible. Thank you to all our volunteers! We cannot wait to welcome you all back on-site soon.

# 324 hours



Brittany Beatty, Discovery House



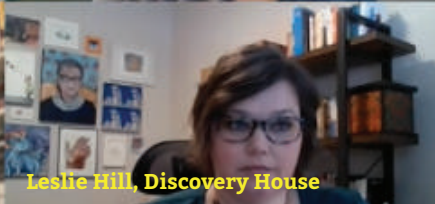
The Honourable Rajan Sawhney



Cst. Cameron Sunderland, CPS



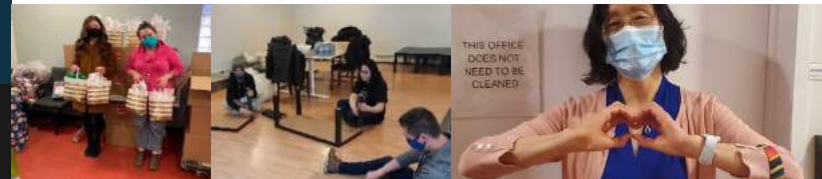
Kim Ruse, CWES & CDVC



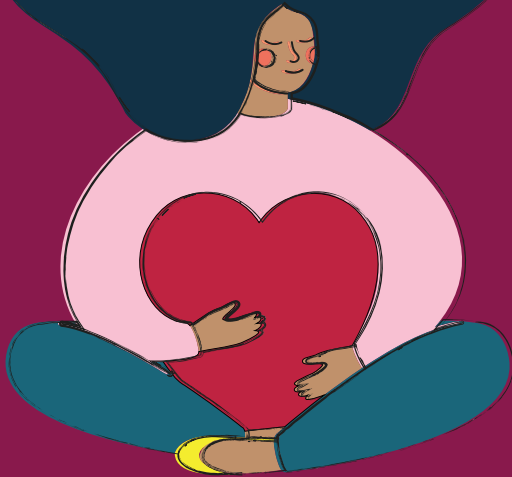
Leslie Hill, Discovery House



Stephanie Wright, 211 Alberta



Generous Calgarians donated more than \$100,000 in goods, including contributions to the Harvest Table renovations, food, quilts, jewelry, hand sanitizer, and more!



In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work, and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations (Bears paw, Chiniki, Wesley), the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

Discovery House  
 PO Box 85058, Albert Park PO  
 Calgary, AB T2A 7R7  
 403-670-0467  
[discoveryhouse.ca](http://discoveryhouse.ca)

Charitable Registration #11882 3483 RR0001

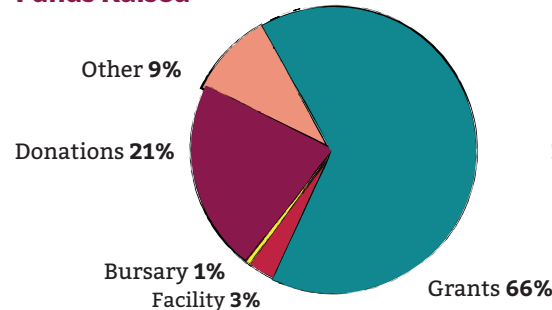
# Thank you



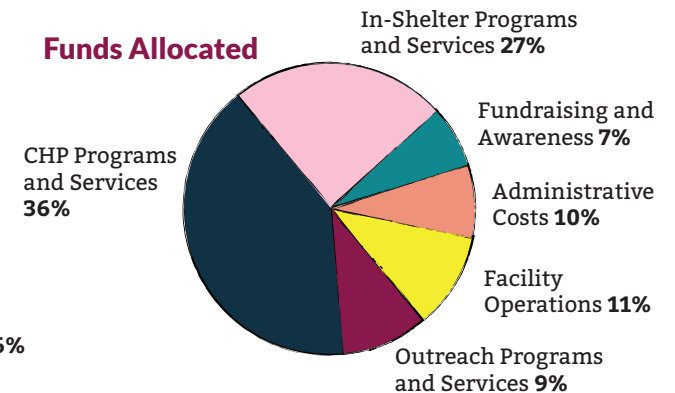
We are extremely fortunate to receive annual funding from the Government of Alberta, the City of Calgary, and the Calgary Homeless Foundation. These funders have been incredibly supportive through this challenging year, ensuring we can continue to safely serve families fleeing domestic violence.

We also rely on additional support from generous individuals, businesses, and organizations to provide our clients with life-changing programs and services. In 2020-21, our dedicated donors stepped up and donated \$1.3M to help us meet unforeseen costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are continually amazed at the generosity of our donors and supporters, especially through an uncertain and challenging time. Thank you for your unwavering support. You have helped hundreds of families rebuild their lives!

## Funds Raised



## Funds Allocated



**Total Raised \$5.3 Million**

## Recognition



Discovery House was fortunate to be recognized as a *Top 100 Impact Charity* by Charity Intelligence, and as one of *Canada's best charities 2020: Top 100* by both Maclean's and MoneySense.