



# Looking | Glass

FOUNDATION FOR EATING DISORDERS

# 2023

ANNUAL REPORT





# A Message

## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

We are thrilled to share our 2023 Annual Report, showcasing highlights of the impactful work we have accomplished together over the past year!

The year 2023 was truly eventful, marked by numerous achievements that have significantly advanced our mission to decrease isolation, instill hope and sustain recovery for individuals impacted by eating disorders. A notable milestone was our ability to extend support and services to more than 1000 people in the community. This achievement not only reflects our growing outreach but also underscores the critical need for our services. We were delighted to secure sustainable funding for our Bridge the Gap program. Initially launched in response to the surge in counselling needs that emerged through the COVID pandemic, this program has now transitioned to one of our core offerings. And with input from staff, board, volunteers, participants, and key partners, we developed a new Strategic Plan to guide our work over the next three years.

The resilience, strength and determination of the individuals who access our programs inspire us daily. Witnessing their journey to recovery - their steps forward, overcoming setbacks, and embracing new thought patterns of acceptance and self-compassion, fuels our commitment to this work. Their stories motivate us to persist in our efforts, aware that there are many more individuals we aim to reach and much more work to be done.

As we celebrate these achievements, our commitment to reducing barriers to care, providing compassionate support, fostering resilience, and promoting recovery within our community remains steadfast. Achieving these goals would not be possible without the continued support and dedication of our donors, volunteers, partners, and staff. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our cause. Together we are making a difference in the lives of so many who are affected by eating disorders.

With much gratitude,

Lisa Brooks, Executive Director  
Denise Karkkainen, Board Chair




2023

## Highlights &amp; Initiatives

**1,000+**  
PEOPLE SUPPORTED

**91%**  
REPORT  
PROGRAMS FILL  
A VITAL NEED

**4** NEW  
THERAPEUTIC  
GROUPS

**6** SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED

**13** PRACTICUM  
PLACEMENTS

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Recognizing the need for affirming support for people from the 2SLGTBQIA+ community who are struggling with an eating disorder, our entire team completed the QMUNITY Inclusivity Training and are now developing specialized program offerings to better address the unique needs of this community.

### SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

By successfully securing funding from the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, we were able to move Bridge the Gap from a pilot project to one of our core programs.

**18,210**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

## Breaking Down Barriers to Recovery

Imagine facing the daunting journey of battling an eating disorder, only to be met with insurmountable barriers to accessing treatment. Looking Glass Foundation is rewriting this narrative by tearing down the walls of strict eligibility criteria, referral requirements, time limits and financial burdens that often stand between individuals and the support they desperately need. We do not require a formal referral or diagnosis, our peer support programs are offered for as long as they are needed so participants do not age out, and all services are offered at little to no cost.

## Easing the Financial Strain of Recovery

Recovery shouldn't come at the expense of basic needs like shelter and food. Yet the financial burden of seeking treatment for an eating disorder can be overwhelming, with counseling costs in particular reaching staggering heights at \$200 per hour. That's why we launched our Bridge the Gap Counselling program, offering up to 10 months of weekly or biweekly counselling at only \$35 per hour. Nobody should have to make the impossible choice between their well-being and their financial stability.

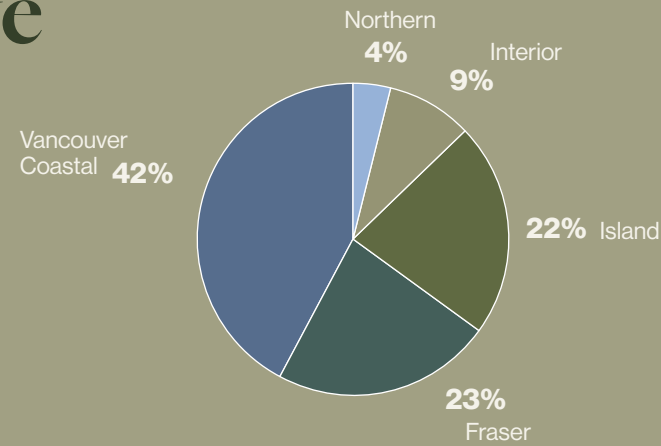
## Building a Stronger Support Network

In British Columbia, the scarcity of specialized clinicians trained in eating disorder support often leaves individuals in limbo and at risk for months on while waiting for services. Our Bridge the Gap Counselling program not only meets the immediate demand for counselling services, but also builds a sustainable future for British Columbians by cultivating a new generation of specialized clinicians. Since 2022, 11 students who completed a practicum at Looking Glass are now in private practice specializing in eating disorder support.



# Who We Serve

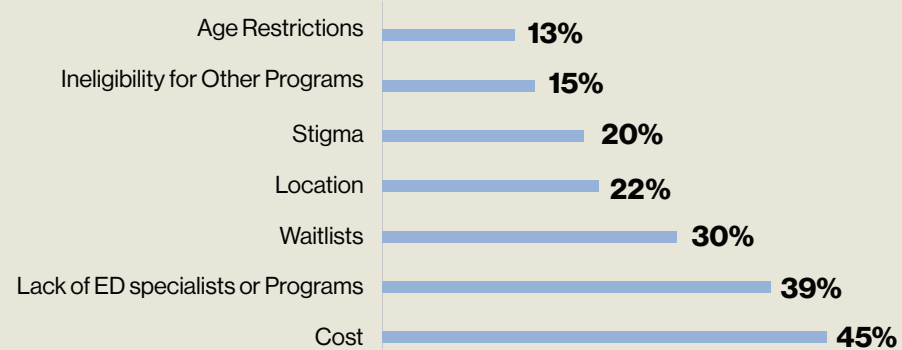
## PROVINCIAL HEALTH AUTHORITY REPRESENTATION



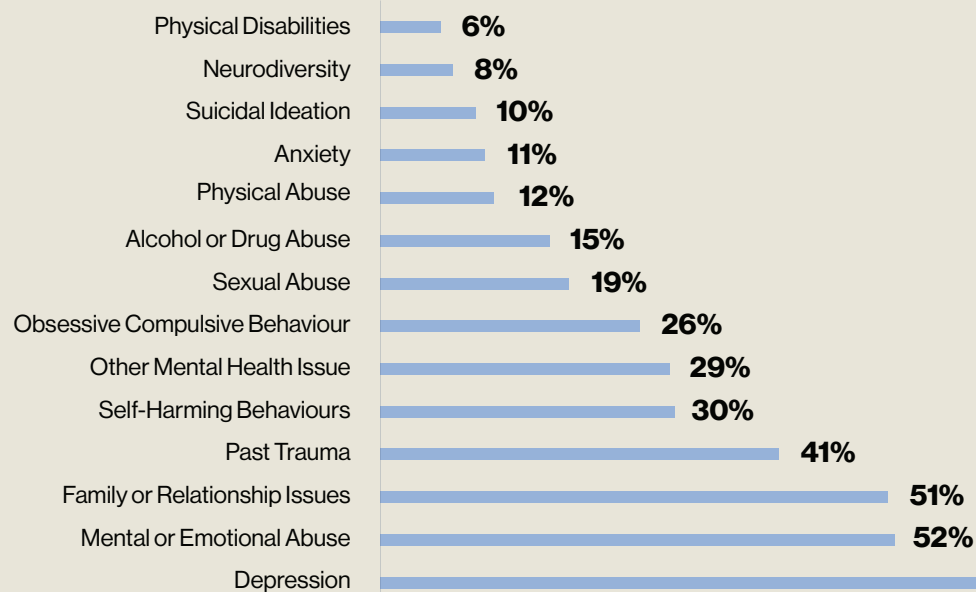
When someone is experiencing an eating disorder, completing even minor every day tasks can become a challenge. Accessing mental health care to support their recovery shouldn't be another obstacle they face. Safe and timely access to compassionate support means individuals are one — or often several — steps further in their recovery journey.

**79%**  
of participants indicate they have experienced barriers to accessing other treatment options

### ACCESS BARRIERS



### COMPLEXITY



**96%**  
of participants report experiencing other mental health issues or have survived past traumas

More than **1.7 million** Canadians are currently experiencing an eating disorder and **less than half** are able to access treatment or support.  
**Together, we can help change that.**



Source: Galmiche et al., 2019





## Marsha's Story

Navigating mental health struggles are inherently challenging—even with access to resources and a strong support network. When additional barriers and past trauma exist, these challenges and stresses are compounded and recovery can begin to feel impossible.

**“I have struggled with my relationship with food since childhood and put my body through so much agony of dieting, excessive exercise, bingeing, and then repeating the cycle. This cycle began early in my childhood, brought on and intensified by many traumatic experiences.”**

Like too many individuals, the anxieties of COVID brought Marsha to the lowest point of her eating disorder and in 2020, she was officially diagnosed with binge eating disorder. “I had never felt so isolated in my life,” she shared with us. In receiving her diagnosis, Marsha realized her experiences happened to others more than she had initially thought and she began to feel less alone. She was also motivated to learn more about her diagnosis, and herself.

Despite wanting to take steps toward recovery, and fearing the escalation of her eating habits, she didn't feel she had someone who could empathize and understand her to go to. This was when she found Looking Glass and joined the Personal Recovery Space program and began her gradual entry to start her healing journey.

**“Looking Glass has been life changing for me and I am so thankful that I found it. The fact that these services are free, accessible, flexible, and ongoing has given me so much strength in myself to continue the road to recovery.”**

Though recovery can be experienced in ebbs and flows, Marsha now feels empowered to continue fighting for and honouring herself as she embraces the journey and advocates for expanded mental health supports for eating disorders.



# Our Programs



## Peer Support

Our three peer support programs are a lifeline for so many – **being the only programs they can access to support their recovery because they aren't eligible for other supports.** Participants also tell us that the peer support programs are an excellent gateway to more intensive treatment and supports, providing for many their first opportunity to process thoughts related to their eating disorder, as well as play a key role in helping people sustain their recovery. Peer Support is recognized by the Mental Health Commission of Canada as an essential component of the mental health system and help support positive outcomes including reduced use of health services, decreased isolation, and increased social functioning, ability to cope with stress, and quality of life.



# 96%

of participants believe their therapy will help them accomplish their recovery goals



I really appreciate that this program is available and I believe it's valuable to both the client and the student. We face a shortage of accessible counsellors who have experience with Eating Disorders in BC and this program certainly does fill the gap!

- Program Participant



Finding others with similar struggles is very helpful. This is one of the very few resources that I have been able to access without being put on a wait list.

- Program Participant

# 98%

of participants report that they are motivated to recover



## Bridge the Gap

Looking Glass Counselling | Bridge the Gap provides **affordable group and one-to-one counselling to individuals who are affected by eating disorders** in British Columbia. This removes the high cost barrier of private clinics and typically lengthy wait lists. It also offers a meaningful learning experience for master's level students in the field of counselling and the opportunity increase their experience and specialization in eating disorder care and recovery support.



## Looking Glass Residence

Through a unique partnership with PHSA, we help provide a place of healing for those who require residential treatment to recover from their eating disorder. All clinical programming is provided through PHSA and Looking Glass Foundation maintains the physical space and funds guided recreational activities to help the residents hone **the life skills and confidence needed to sustain their recovery post discharge.** These activities include restaurant food challenges, guided meditation and yoga, art therapy, tutoring, grocery shopping and meal planning, and physical activities that are safe to do in recovery.



## Scholarships

The Reflections Scholarship supports **students who have lived experience with an eating disorder by helping them pursue their academic and career goals** through education. It is awarded in recognition of someone's strength and courage in facing their eating disorder as well as their enthusiasm and tenacity for their chosen academic path and the career they plan to follow.





# Our Community of Support

## Volunteers

Looking Glass' work is made possible thanks to the dedication and commitment of our inspiring volunteers. These individuals keep our Peer Support programs running, work on committees and our board, and help create an unforgettable experience at Reflections Gala. We are constantly inspired by the hundreds of individuals who make up our community of incredible volunteers.

**18,210**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

## Reflections Gala

On May 4, 2023, Reflections presented by Ledcor Group and PCI Developments incredibly raised over half a million dollars for Looking Glass. This was a record-breaking success and we are overjoyed with the outcome. Each year, Reflections provides critical funds for our continued program and service delivery and 2023 exceeded them all.

**\$502,921**  
IN FUNDS RAISED

## Community Events

Our community truly is something special and we love to see so many individuals giving their time and energy to spread awareness and raise funds through events and initiatives. In 2023, we partnered with Be Kind to Your Mind for the second year in a row for an evening of delicious food, uplifting music and heartfelt connection in support of eating disorder recovery. We also saw many businesses rally their communities, in person as well as online, around Eating Disorder Awareness Week. We love seeing the dedication and creativity each year in these events!



**Are you passionate about creating accessible programs and services for individuals battling an eating disorder and breaking down barriers to support?**

**Become a Looking Glass GEM by Giving Every Month!**



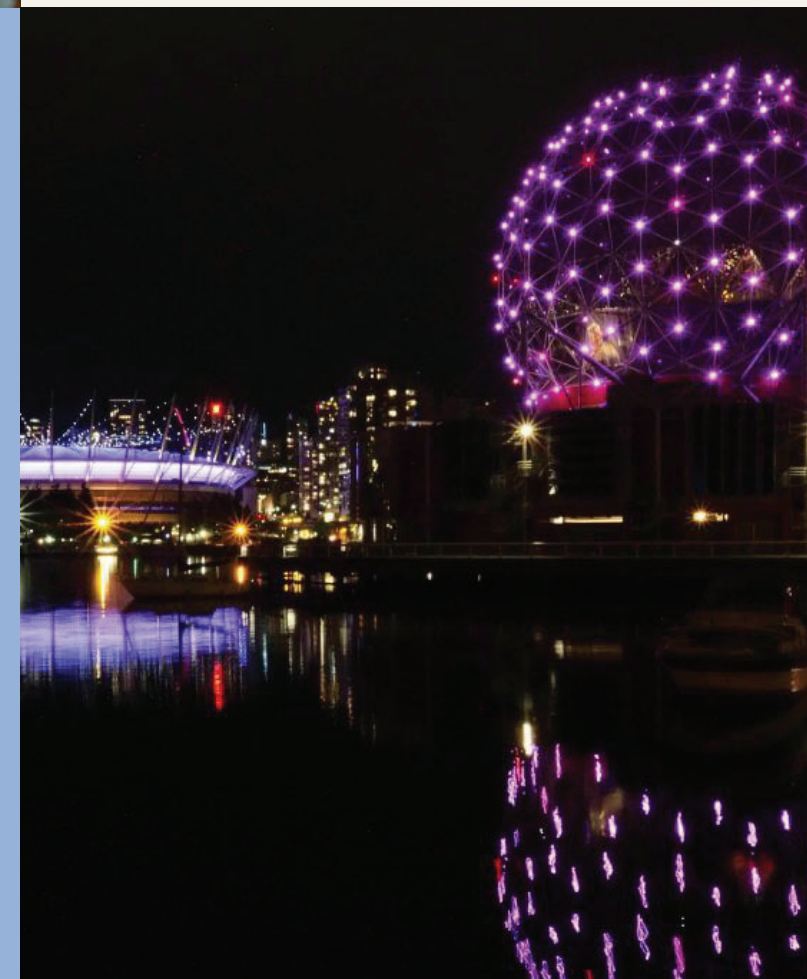
**Looking Glass Foundation immediately struck me as a place I wanted to be a part of. The amount of different sources of support provided is incredible, and I truly wish I had had such a wonderful resource during my own recovery journey.**

- Roxanne, Volunteer



**Having supported Looking Glass for a number of years, I have been consistently impressed with their excellent work. I have found Looking Glass to be agile, strategic, focused and caring while serving a significant need in the community.**

- Looking Glass Donor





# Strategic Plan

In 2023, Looking Glass unveiled a comprehensive 3-year strategic plan — a clear path forward that details our goals and growth for our key program areas while staying true to our organization’s mission, vision and values.



- Deliver impactful and accessible programs that are responsive to the diverse needs of our community
- Develop new and innovative programs that fill gaps in BC’s continuum of care for eating disorder treatment
- Collaborate with related service providers and leverage opportunities



- Grow and diversify revenue sources and our donor base
- Strengthen existing corporate and government partnerships and pursue new opportunities for collaboration
- Secure multi-year funding commitments



- Build and nurture a diverse team of engaged staff, volunteers and board members
- Enhance continuous learning and development activities
- Introduce additional opportunities to celebrate successes and recognize everyone’s contributions



- Act as a hub for information and resources about eating disorders and treatment options
- Increase awareness and education about eating disorders, dispel myths and
- Demonstrate the impact of our programs to the public and our funders



## Recovery Is Possible

**For 22 years, Looking Glass Foundation has been working towards our vision of a province where everyone who is struggling with an eating disorder has access to the services they need to support their recovery. Together we have walked alongside so many on their courageous paths to recovery, but there is much left to be done. We hope you continue to join us on this inspiring journey towards hope and healing.**





# healing happens together