



ANNUAL REPORT

— 2025 —

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from Leadership	3-4
Organization Overview	5-8
Highlights of the Year	9
Financial Report	10-15
A Glimpse Inside the work	16
What Our Team is Saying	17-18
Governance	19
Our Team	20-21
Staff and Volunteer Recognition	22-24
Special Acknowledgements	25
Photo Gallery	26-27
Looking Ahead	28
Strategic Direction 2025-2026	29
Thank You to Our Supporters	30
Contact Information	31

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Couch of HOPE is what happens when people come together to meet a real need with heart, persistence, and care.

I've sat around tables when this was just an idea—a hope—and watched it grow into a vital service that's changing lives across Nova Scotia. Along the way, I've seen people stay and grow, and new people step in with passion and purpose. It hasn't always been easy, but every step has been worth it.

Mental health care isn't a luxury—it's a necessity. While I haven't worked in the mental health field myself, I've had the honour of supporting and loving those who do. My wife, children, and close colleagues have all worked in roles connected to mental health, and I've seen firsthand the difference this kind of care makes. Their stories, and the courage of those who access support through Couch of HOPE, always reminds me why this work matters.

What I appreciate most about Couch of HOPE is how deeply its mission and vision are lived out. This is an organization committed to compassion, inclusion, and excellence—not just in the counselling services it provides, but in how it equips the next generation of therapists and strengthens our province's capacity to care.

To our board, staff, supervisors, counselling therapist interns, and volunteers—thank you. You are the reason this work is possible. It's been incredible to see how far we've come, and I'm filled with hope for where we're headed.

Don Bouwman

Board Chair

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

This past year has been a season of re-anchoring and renewal for Couch of Hope. Returning from maternity leave in early 2025 gave me the opportunity to see our work with fresh eyes—not just our systems and services, but the deeper purpose behind them.

We didn't just meet our goals—we expanded access, invested in our people, and nurtured a culture that values sustainable, relational growth. With support from a multi-year government grant, we scaled our internship program from 10 to 14 interns (with capacity for growth to 28), increased supervision and intake capacity, and provided 3,354 free individual counselling sessions to 712 new clients. Behind these numbers are powerful stories of healing, presence, and transformation.

This season has also been one of reflection. Returning to leadership offered space to reimagine how we support our team—from better internal systems to a stronger focus on building shared leadership. *Anchored in hope, growing in purpose*, we've embraced a mindset of sustainability: empowering others, not creating dependencies. We're working to ensure our interns, clients, and staff feel supported, not stretched thin.

As we look ahead to 2025–2026, our focus is on deepening the quality of our internship experience, strengthening internal alignment, and making our services more equitable and accessible. Through it all, we remain committed to walking alongside those who might otherwise be unseen, and doing so with care, integrity, and hope.

I'm deeply grateful to our board, funders, staff, interns, and partners—and especially to Michelle, whose vision and dedication continue to guide this work forward. It's a privilege to do this hand in hand. *When we show up for this work together, the impact reaches further than anyone of us could imagine, lives are changed—not just for those we serve, but for all of us who get to be part of the journey.*

Jarah Gregory
Executive Director

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

About Couch of H.O.P.E

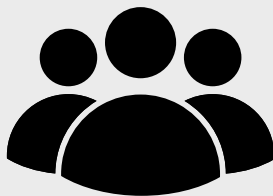
Couch of H.O.P.E is a community-based organization offering accessible, affordable mental health counselling for individuals experiencing mild to moderate challenges. We focus on serving marginalized communities through individual and group therapy.

As an approved practicum site for Acadia and Yorkville Universities, we also help grow Nova Scotia's mental health capacity by training Counselling Therapist Interns under the supervision of NSCCT-approved clinicians.

Clients can self-refer or be referred by community organizations. Services are available to those without insurance or the means to pay for counselling.

Couch of H.O.P.E is inspired by and dedicated to the memory of Diana Hope George (Bastien) (1973–2015), whose compassion, warmth, and deep care for others continue to guide our mission.

SINCE 2021:



1,775
Clients Served



54
Interns Trained



13,346
Counselling Sessions

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Our Mission

To support the mental wellness of individuals across Nova Scotia by offering free counselling services and actively contributing to the growth of the province's mental health care capacity through intern training, supervision, and system-level development.

Our Vision

A future where every Nova Scotian has access to compassionate, inclusive and high-quality mental health care, supported by well-trained counselling therapist interns.

Our Values

Accessibility, Compassion, Growth, Equity, Accountability,
Collaboration, Commitment to care

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

CORE PROGRAMS & SERVICES

WHAT WE OFFER

Free mental health counselling services for Nova Scotians who do not have insurance and cannot afford to pay out of pocket. Our services support Children ages 10 and up, Teens and Adults. We Offer in-person sessions at both our locations, as well as video or phone sessions.

OUR ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You may be eligible if:

- You are receiving Nova Scotia Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)
- You do not have insurance
- You cannot afford to pay for services

If none of these apply, unfortunately, you are not eligible for services.

WE ARE A PRACTICUM SITE

We are proud to serve as an approved practicum site for master's-level counselling students from Yorkville University, Acadia University, and several other post-secondary institutions. Over the years, we have welcomed students from a variety of academic programs, enriching our team with diverse perspectives and approaches to care.

Our Counselling Therapist Interns are in the final stage of their training and provide compassionate, high-quality support to clients. Their work is closely guided by NSCCT-approved Practicum Supervisors, many of whom also hold credentials with other recognized licensing bodies. This ensures interns receive professional mentorship rooted in best practices and ethical standards.

Training at our site is robust and multi-layered. Interns participate in weekly individual and group supervision, benefit from regular feedback from their professors and Practicum Coordinators, and are supported by our collaborative clinical team. This comprehensive network of support fosters growth, confidence, and clinical excellence.

All practicum placements are conducted in person, allowing interns to fully engage with clients and our community. Clients benefit not only from the interns' dedication and fresh perspectives, but also from the collective expertise of the broader clinical team—ensuring they receive well-rounded, thoughtful, and professional care.

You can learn more about our practicum program here:
couchofhope.ca/complete-practicum-with-us

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

CORE PROGRAMS & SERVICES

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

We welcome passionate individuals to join our volunteer team, we offer positions including:

- Intake Worker
- Front Desk Receptionist/Admin
- Social Media Content Creator
- Community Outreach



COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Our Community Outreach Team helps to spread awareness about our services across Nova Scotia. We connect with local organizations, build referral relationships, and ensure that more people learn about the support available through Couch of H.O.P.E.

We're always open to attending community information events, resource fairs, and networking opportunities.

Community Outreach Contact:
Email: community@couchofhope.com

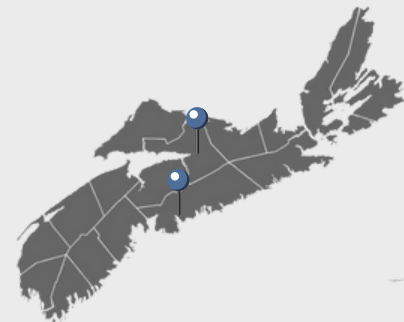
OUR LOCATIONS:

Main Couch of Hope Office:

 192 Wyse Road, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3A 1M9

Couch of Hope Office Located in the CMHA Office:

 859 Prince Street, Truro, NS B2N 1G3



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

BY THE NUMBERS:

2024-2025 Impact Snapshot

Thanks to the generosity of our funders, donors, and community partners, Couch of Hope continued to offer completely subsidized mental health care to individuals and families across our community. Here's a look at our shared impact:

Sessions Delivered

- 3,424 counselling sessions provided
- Projected Total: 3,852
- Top Provider: Kerry Ferguson (Intern) — 283 sessions across 30 weeks

Estimated Value of Care Provided:

While we do not charge clients for services, the estimated market value of this care—at \$85 per session—totals over \$291,000 in mental health support delivered to the community this year.

Clients Served

- **672 new clients** accessed services this year
- Total of **1,775 unique individuals** supported since opening

Intern Training

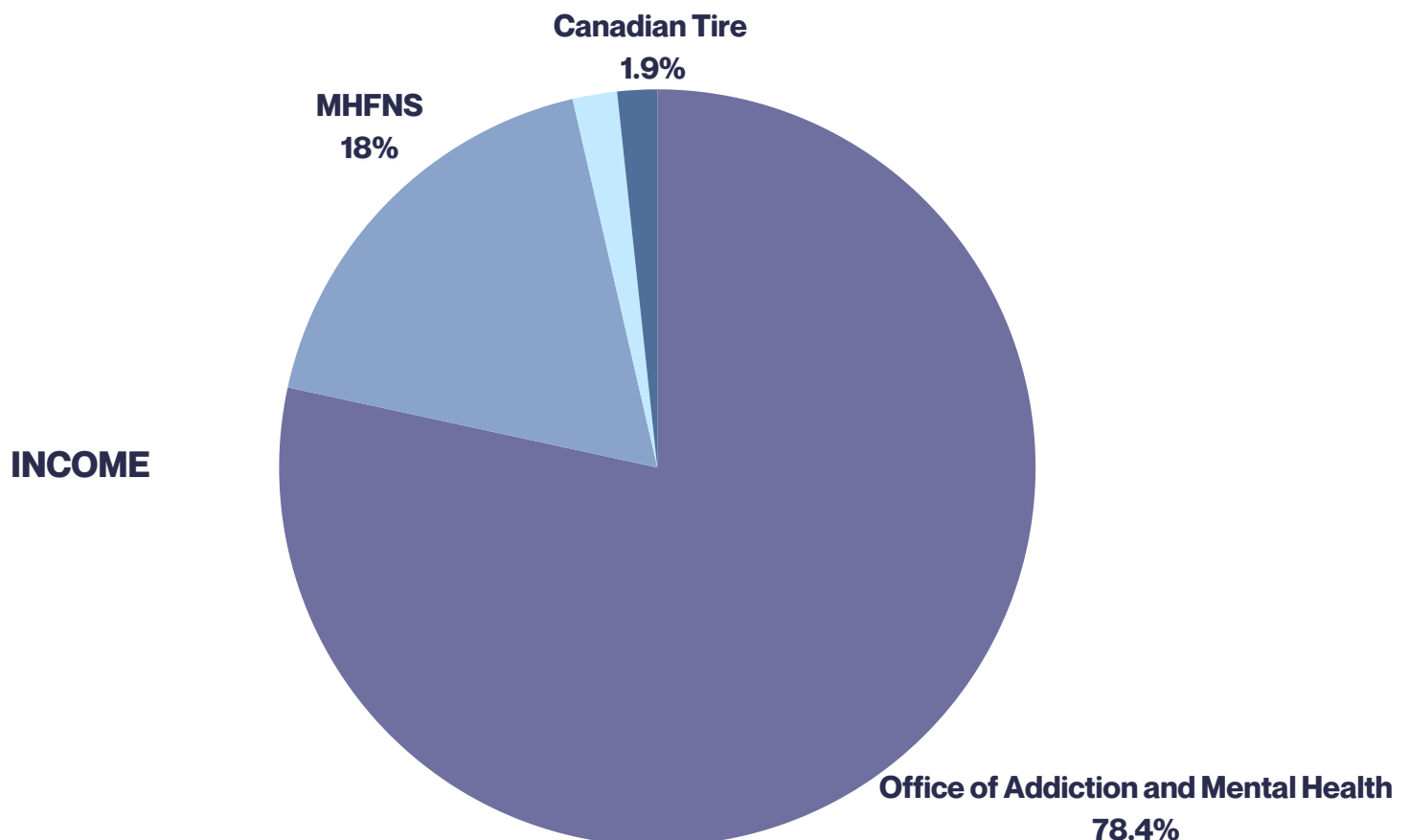
- 24 counselling interns trained and equipped through our practicum program
- Enhancing access to care while building future capacity in the mental health field

2024 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW: FUELING OUR MISSION

In 2024, Couch of Hope secured over **\$314,000 in funding** — a transformational increase compared to previous years. Much of this funding was received late in the fiscal year, which meant we continued to operate modestly, prioritizing **sustainability over rapid expansion**.

Historically, we relied on support from ML Family Counselling to stay afloat. This year marked a turning point: with direct funding from major partners like the Office of Addictions and Mental Health and the Mental Health Foundation of NS, we can now plan and operate with **greater stability and confidence**.

We ended the year with a **reported surplus of \$175,000**, not because of underspending, but because of **grant timing**. These funds include retroactive and advance allocations from our core funder, and **are already committed to our operations in 2025**. Rather than excess, this surplus represents a **strategic opportunity** — allowing us to invest in supervision, staffing, and expanded service access across Nova Scotia.



2024 FINANCIAL SPENDING

Item	Amount
Revenue	
Office of Addictions & Mental Health	\$ 246,759.20
Mental Health Foundation of NS	\$ 56,652.80
Canadian Tire	\$ 6,077.53
Other Donations	\$ 5,416.57
Gross Profit	\$ 314,906.10
Expenses	
Wages	\$ 89,680.21
Admin/ CPP/EI/Health	\$ 20,175.56
Rent	\$ 11,024.00
Office Supplies	\$ 953.00
Telephones/Fax/Internet	\$ 795.62
Insurance	\$ 1,742.00
Computers/Data Processing	\$ 2,454.75
Fees/Subscriptions	\$ 4,816.94
Advertising & Promotion	\$ 650.00

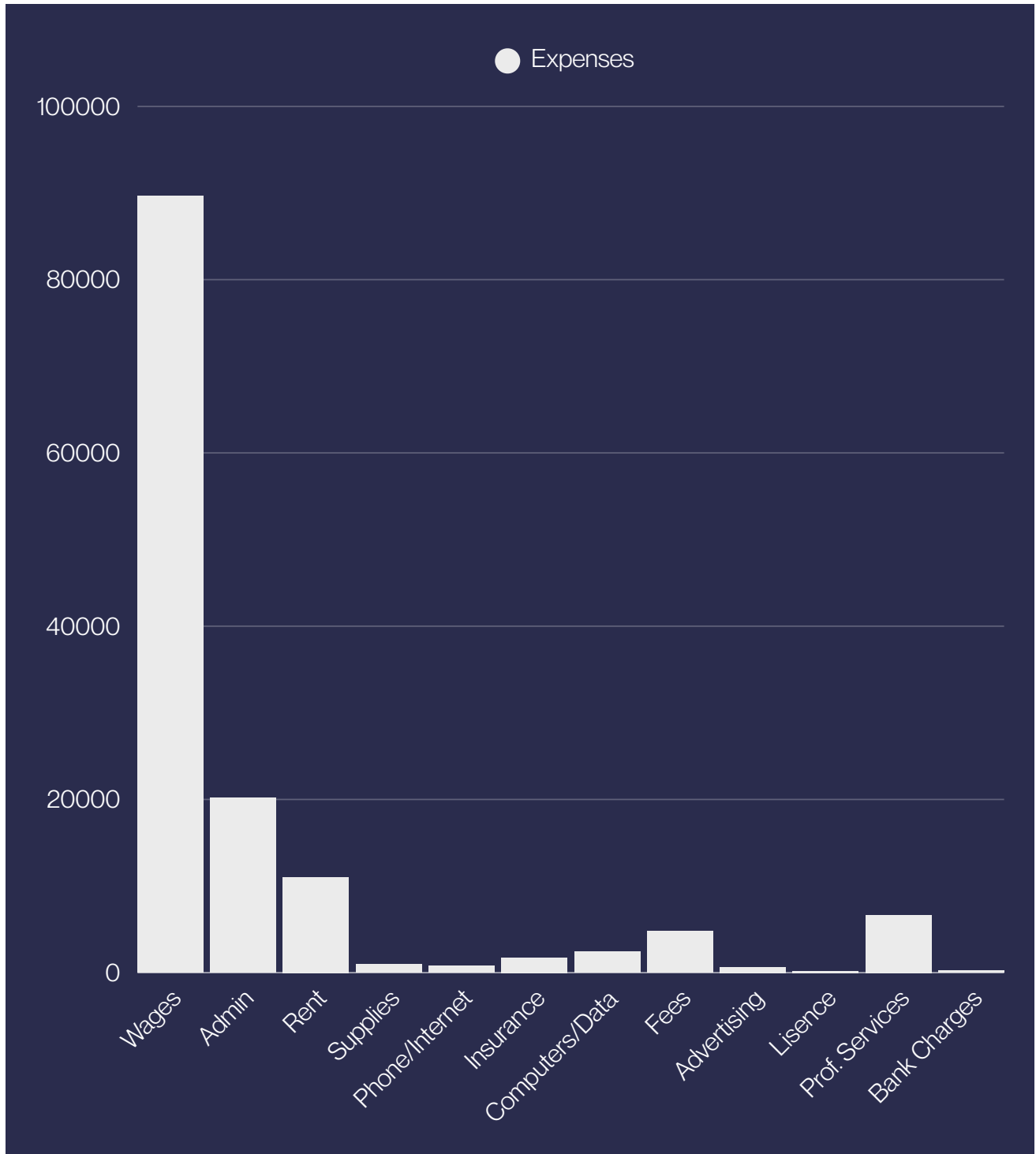
Business Lisence	\$ 206.43
Professional Services	\$ 6,648.96
Bank Charges	\$ 235.00
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 139,382.52

Gross Profit	\$ 314,906.10
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 139,382.52
Carried-Forward Funds	\$ 175,523.58

THE STORY IN OUR NUMBERS

By the Numbers (2024)

- \$314,906 in revenue (↑ from 2023)
- 78% funded by Office of Addictions & Mental Health
- \$175,000 surplus to reinvest in 2025
- 64% of funds went to staffing and direct service costs
- Transitioned from reliance on ML Family to direct funder partnerships



FINANCIAL DONORS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Celebrating Generosity & Partnership

We are deeply grateful for the generous financial support and collaborative partnerships that fuel the mission of Couch of Hope. Every donation and act of support—whether financial, practical, or relational—has helped us provide accessible, compassionate mental health care and grow our impact in the community.

This year, we would like to extend special thanks to:

- Office of Addictions and Mental Health
- Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia
- Canadian Tire – Tantallon
- ML Family – for their generosity in sharing systems, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities that strengthened our capacity and vision

Your support has allowed us to offer high-quality counselling services, expand programming, support intern development, and sustain operations with care and consistency.

To all our donors and partners—thank you for believing in our mission. Your support is an essential part of building a more hopeful and mentally healthy future for those we serve.

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHTS

At ML Family, we've deeply valued our ongoing collaboration with Couch of Hope. Many of our most compassionate and skilled team members began their journey with COH, and it's been incredible to witness the continuity of care as they transition into their roles with us post-licensure. This partnership not only supports the growth of emerging therapists but also strengthens our community by fostering a network of values-aligned, trauma-informed care.

Michelle Labine, PhD, RP, Principal Therapist & Clinic Owner



ML Family Counselling

As the owner/operator of several Canadian Tire stores in HRM, it's important to us—and to our staff—that we also give back. While we support many great causes, our team was especially excited when we began supporting and fundraising for Couch of HOPE. Mental health, and the specific challenges around accessing services in Nova Scotia, hit home for many of our staff. Learning about Couch of HOPE and being able to share their mission and values with thousands of our customers truly helped our team feel like they were making a meaningful contribution to a critical issue.



Don Bouwman, Associate Dealer
(Canadian Tire, Tantallon NS; Party City, Halifax NS;
Party City, Dartmouth NS)

“The Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia is a proud funder of Couch of Hope. We applaud its commitment to providing fast and free access to mental health supports at a time when it is needed most. With a shared focus on community and connection, we are pleased to partner to change the way people think about mental wellness, mental illness and addiction in our province.

Starr Cunningham, President & CEO



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE WORK:

The numbers tell part of the story — but it's the lived experiences of our interns and clients that truly show the heart of this work.

One intern shared:

"I've seen how removing barriers—like transportation, scheduling, and cost—can open doors for people who may never have accessed therapy otherwise. Couch of HOPE meets people where they are, and that makes all the difference." Another reflected, "Helping clients understand their nervous systems reframed their experiences and gave them hope—it's been incredible to witness that shift."

The work is real, raw, and human. One intern recounted a moment where a client shared they were \$400 short on rent:

"That moment reminded me that counselling can't just address emotions—we have to understand the real-life challenges shaping someone's mental health." And another described a pivotal moment in their clinical development: "When a client became severely dysregulated, I relied on what I'd learned—grounding strategies and supervision. It was a turning point that affirmed my instincts and deepened our therapeutic relationship."

These stories are why we do what we do. Not for quick fixes, but for moments of real connection, insight, and hope.

WHAT OUR TEAM IS SAYING:

Healing happens in relationships and that transformation is felt not only by clients, but also by the interns, supervisors, and staff who hold space for them. Here's what some of them had to say:

“A powerful breakthrough came with a client who had shown minimal progress over the first 15 sessions. I had begun to question whether meaningful change was possible in our work together. Then, in the 16th session, a simple metaphor resonated deeply with her, unlocking a sense of awareness that seemed to open the floodgates to insight. Over the following two weeks, she began to recall and apply previously introduced strategies, translating them into meaningful, selfdirected change. This experience reminds me to trust the power of persistence, presence, and the therapeutic process.”

Louise Deal, Couch of Hope Intern January 2025



“A meaningful moment that I experienced this past year was when a client thanked me for the first time. This client had faced several social and economic challenges before receiving counselling at Couch of Hope and they felt as if they had no support system. After working with each other for a few months, the client thanked me for my support and for providing them with a safe space to talk about things that they had never shared with anyone else. This was meaningful because it was the first time I felt like I had actually made a difference in one of my client’s lives, and it also taught me that having a solid therapeutic relationship can provide the client with the safety and support that they may need. This felt like a big win for the both of us!”

Jesseca Payne, Couch of Hope Intern January 2025



WHAT OUR TEAM IS SAYING:

“It can feel somewhat discouraging when our waitlist runs long and we are confined to only so many available appointments. However, when I am able to call one of our clients to book them in for an appointment, it absolutely is a small but mighty win to know that one more person gets to receive the help they need.”

Nora Featherstone, Intake Worker, Couch of Hope



“Couch of HOPE's mission and ethos empowered me as an intern therapist to meet clients on a human level... I'm proud to have completed my practicum at Couch of HOPE, because I believe their relational approach makes all the difference in the success of therapy.”

Maria Nemis, RCT-C, Couch of Hope Intern Sept 2024



“It's delightful to hear feedback from clients of my intern who share they have made the most progress with her during all of their time invested in counselling.”

Heather Deighan, BPR, MEd Counselling, CCC, RCT



OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair - Don Bouwman

Business Owner / Strategic Leader / Relationship-Centered Entrepreneur

Vice Chair - Josh Penney

Law Student / Veteran / Mentor / Analysis

Treasurer - Dianna Lesperance

Registered Counselling Therapist / Business Owner / Strategic Leader / Industry Knowledge

Secretary - Julie Zinck

Teacher / Registered Counselling Therapist / School Counsellor / Strategic Leader / Industry Knowledge / Youth Advocate

Member at Large - Collin Tyndale

Relationship & People Manager - Banking / Financial & Strategic Planner / Business Developer / Fiscal Steward

Member at Large - Michelle Labine

Founding Member / Psychotherapist / Clinical Supervisor / Clinic Owner

Member at Large - Tammy Bastien

Honorary Member / Social Services / Senior Management

OUR TEAM

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Jarah Gregory, Executive Director

Julia Bouwman, Assistant Director

Grace Atkinson, Intern Development Lead

CORE ADMIN & OPERATIONS

Alice Chen, Intake Coordinator

Nora Featherstone, Intake Worker

Jenna Bouwman, Social Media Manager

PRACTICUM SUPERVISORS

Derek Smith, Lead Clinical Supervisor & Practicum Supervisor

Michelle Labine, Founder & Practicum Supervisor

Jennifer Welcher, Practicum Supervisor

Heather Deighan, Practicum Supervisor

Jason Tucker, Practicum Supervisor

Jessica Heidebrecht, Practicum Supervisor

OUR TEAM

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Brandon Cleversey, Front Desk Receptionist & Social Media Volunteer

Anne Marie Woodgate, Community Engagement Volunteer

Chelsea Trahan, Volunteer Intake Worker

Parniyan Fatemi, Volunteer Intake Worker

Nora Featherstone, (Former) Social Media Consultant

Alice Chen, (Former) Intake Volunteer

OUR COUNSELLING THERAPIST INTERNS

MAY 2024

Hannah Sutherland-Dempsey, Megan Downey, Hanna Doucette, Hayley Wills

SEPTEMBER 2024

Kerry Ferguson, Grace Dakin, Grace Atkinson, Maria Nemis

JANUARY 2025

Kelly Byrne, Mary Robertson, Louise Deal, Kait Dunnet, Jesseca Payne, Grace Myers

MAY 2025

Catharine Fahie, Jenna Jamieson, Yana Shprits, Matt Dewey, Michael Coleman, Miranda Purcell, Corey Bergman, Sheryl Samuel, Brittaney Lewis, Michael Macleod

STAFF RECOGNITION

We recognize the exceptional efforts of **JENNA BOUWMAN**

Since joining Couch of Hope in 2022, Jenna Bouwman has been a steady and creative force behind our work. As our Social Media Manager, Jenna has spent years sharing thoughtful, accessible, and engaging psychoeducational content with our community, helping to break down stigma and make mental health knowledge available to all.

While completing her master's degree in counselling and gaining valuable experience as an intake worker with another clinic, Jenna brought fresh expertise and insight to our organization. She saw opportunities to make our intake process more efficient, accessible, and client-focused, and took the lead in building an organized intake system that has transformed the way we welcome and connect with those seeking support.

Jenna's blend of creativity, professionalism, and compassion has left a lasting mark on Couch of Hope. We are deeply grateful for her commitment to our mission, her willingness to share her growing expertise, and the way she has shaped both our online presence and our client care processes.

Thank you, Jenna, for the heart, skill, and vision you have brought to our team.



Jenna Bouwman
Social Media Manager

INTERN RECOGNITION

We are proud to recognize our January to August 2025 interns, **Louise Deal** and **Mary Robertson**, who have been based at Couch of Hope’s Truro location within the CMHA office. Throughout their practicum, they have demonstrated exceptional dedication, professionalism, and compassion, significantly contributing to our programs and community partnerships. Their efforts have strengthened our presence and supported vital local mental health initiatives.

During their placement, Louise and Mary have:

- Represented Couch of Hope at the CMHA Job Fair
- Represented Couch of Hope at the International Women’s Wellness Event
- Participated in the Monday Community Mental Health Group
- Participated in the Tuesday Community Mental Health Group
- Participated in the Wednesday East Hants Community Mental Health Group

Their positive energy, commitment, and willingness to go above and beyond have made a lasting impact on our organization and the community we serve. We sincerely appreciate all they have contributed during their time with us.



Not pictured: Louise Deal

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

We extend our sincere gratitude to our dedicated volunteers who have contributed their time, energy to support Couch of Hope’s mission over the past year.

Brandon has been a consistent and welcoming presence at the front desk while also assisting with social media content development. **Anne Marie** has strengthened our community engagement efforts by fostering connections with local partners and gathering valuable resources.



Brandon Cleversey,
Front Desk Receptionist & Social Media Volunteer

We are also thankful to **Chelsea** and **Parniyan** for their meaningful contributions to the intake team. Each volunteer has played a significant role in enhancing our services, and we are truly appreciative of their commitment.



Anne Marie Woodgate,
Community Engagement



Chelsea Trahan,
Intake Team



Parniyan Fatemi
Intake Team

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As we neared the end of the 2024–2025 fiscal year, Couch of Hope experienced several important transitions in both leadership and staffing.

We said heartfelt goodbyes to:

- Nicole Terry, Vice President of the Board
- Sam Nestor, Treasurer
- Kate Pinsent, Intake Coordinator
- Lisa Dexter, Practicum Supervisor
- Felicity Aldan
- Taylor Armstrong



Each of these individuals brought care, dedication, and meaningful contributions to their roles, and we remain deeply grateful for their time with Couch of Hope. Their impact continues to be felt across our organization.

Following these transitions, we welcomed new staff, expanded our volunteer team, and filled key leadership and operational positions. We're thankful for the smooth transitions and for the continued support and collaboration across our team and board.

Couch of Hope remains committed to nurturing a strong and compassionate team as we move forward — always building on the foundation laid by those who have been part of our journey.

PHOTO GALLERY

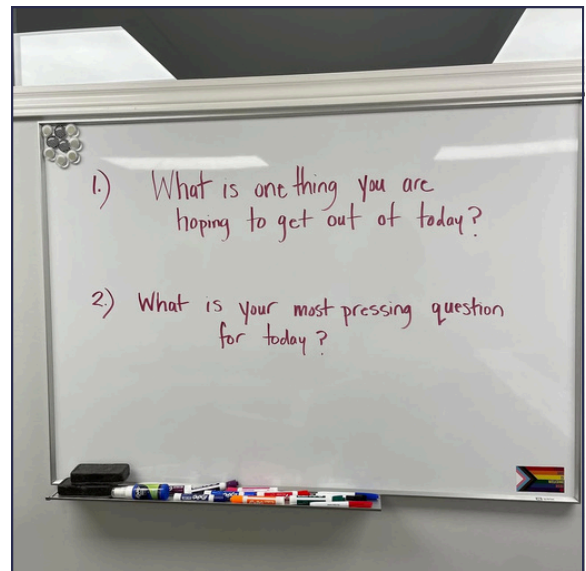


PHOTO GALLERY



LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter this new fiscal year, we are pleased to continue working with **Julia Bouwman** in her role as Assistant Director. Since joining mid-May, Julia has already made significant strides in strengthening our internal operations, enhancing volunteer coordination, and increasing community engagement.

Her development of clear systems, improved communications, and organizational tools has built strong momentum within the team. Though not full-time, Julia's dedication and leadership have been instrumental in advancing Couch of HOPE's mission, and we look forward to her continued contributions as we move forward. Her work continues to shape and strengthen our operations.

We are also thrilled to have **Michael Coleman** joining us to assist with interviewing incoming interns for January 2026. Michael brings a unique blend of experience from both the corporate sector and the counselling therapy field, equipping him with valuable insights and expertise.

His diverse background enhances our ability to select and support interns who align with our mission and values, and we look forward to the positive contributions he will bring to this important process.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION: 2025-2026



Welcome to
Couch of Hope
Mental Health Counselling Services



Expand COH Branches Across Nova Scotia

Grow thoughtfully beyond Dartmouth to better serve the province, especially under-resourced communities.



Develop Mobile Services

Pilot flexible, community-based models of care for populations with limited access to in-person services.



Secure Sustainable Funding

Build consistent annual funding (\$350K-\$600K) to support programming, staffing, and infrastructure.



Increase Awareness & Engagement

Create public understanding of COH's mission, attract future therapists, and build community partnerships.



Strengthen Internal Capacity

Enhance governance, clinical leadership, staff well-being, and operational systems to ensure long-term sustainability.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Canadian Mental Health Association
Mental health for all



Brightside
INTEGRATED HEALTH



DIVERSE ROOTS THERAPY
Counselling Services

We are deeply grateful for the generosity of our supporters. Your contributions allow us to expand our reach and provide timely, accessible support to those who might otherwise face long wait times for care.

We welcome the opportunity to partner with others who share our mission.

If you're interested in collaborating or supporting our work, please contact:

Jarah Gregory, Executive Director

Email: executivedirector@couchofhope.com



CONTACT INFORMATION



www.couchofhope.com



intake@couchofhope.com



902-707-4414



192 Wyse Rd, Dartmouth, NS B3A 1M9



Couch of HOPE Non Profit Charity Nova Scotia



[@couchofhopenonprofit](https://www.instagram.com/couchofhopenonprofit)