

FOCUS TORONTO IMPACT EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

MAY 2025

Vision  Results

Contact Information: Dr. San Ng, MBA, PhD. sng@visionandresults.com

Citation: Ng, S., & Nerad, S. (2025, March). FOCUS Toronto Impact Evaluation. Vision & Results Inc.

Report Distribution: This report is authorized for distribution in its entirety by the United Way of Greater Toronto. No alterations or modifications to the content of this report may be made without the prior written consent of Vision & Results Inc.

Disclaimer: The recommendations set forth in this report are provided by Vision & Results Inc. based on the information available and provided at the time of its preparation. Vision & Results Inc. does not assume any responsibility for any decisions or actions taken by any parties in relation to the contents of this report.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.0 BACKGROUND	9
2.0 METHODOLOGY	12
3.0 FINDINGS	21
4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS	61
5.0 FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS.....	65
APPENDIX A: DOCUMENTS & DATA REVIEWED	66
APPENDIX B: PARTIES INTERVIEWED	67
APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS	68
APPENDIX D: CLIENT IMPACT STORIES	84
APPENDIX E: GLOSSARY	87

Executive Summary

Background

Furthering Our Community by Uniting Services Toronto (FOCUS Toronto) is an innovative multi-sectoral Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) initiative that aims to reduce crime, victimization and improve community resiliency and well-being. FOCUS Toronto is co-led by the City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, and Toronto Police Service. Beginning with the establishment of one table for the Rexdale area in 2013, FOCUS Toronto is now comprised of seven Situation Tables¹: FOCUS Downtown West, FOCUS Downtown East, FOCUS Scarborough, FOCUS Rexdale, FOCUS Black Creek, FOCUS York, and FOCUS East York.

About this Evaluation

During the fall of 2024, Vision & Results Inc. was engaged through a competitive procurement process to undertake an Impact Evaluation of FOCUS Toronto. The purpose of the Impact Evaluation is to assess program outcomes - how FOCUS Toronto has impacted its intended recipients, the clients, partner agencies, and service delivery system. To understand the conditions and factors that may have influenced the extent to which the outcomes of FOCUS Toronto have been achieved, all components of the logic model for FOCUS Toronto were examined including governance, leadership, structure, activities, and outputs. In this report, observations regarding the growth and sustainability of FOCUS Toronto are provided, along with recommendations for the future.

Methodology

Mixed methods were used to complete the evaluation including the gathering and review of FOCUS Toronto qualitative and quantitative data, as well as a secondary review of existing reports and evaluations. Data were reviewed from the FOCUS Toronto Database comprised of data for over 6,000 situations from January 2013 to August 2024. Interviews were held with partner agency representatives and other key informants. A survey was administered to over 600 partner agency representatives with a 26% response rate (156 survey participants). Six focus groups involving 48 attendees were facilitated. FOCUS Toronto client impact stories were gathered from eight client storybooks and five interviews. All data were synthesized and triangulated to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement to support continuous quality improvement and sustainability. Recommendations for enhancing FOCUS Toronto are provided, along with strategic questions for deepening FOCUS Toronto's impact at the individual, organization and system levels.

Key Challenges and Limitations

Data availability and the scope of the evaluation were challenges that contributed to the limitations of this evaluation. While the database for FOCUS Toronto is vast, advanced statistical analysis was not completed to examine the correlation of factors nor the statistical significance of changes over time due to limited time and resources. Furthermore, the study did not include an economic analysis or 'return on investment' calculation as a study of this kind requires dedicated focus to design and complete. Another challenge is

¹ This evaluation was commissioned before the seventh FOCUS Situation Table was established. Although seven Situation Tables now exist, only six were in scope for this evaluation.

that year over year client, organization and community impact data was not available for analysis and therefore trends could not be provided. Another area that should be noted is that this evaluation attempted to assess impact in terms of short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, however current data collection methods do not easily allow for the measurement of those outcomes. A final limitation pertains to challenges in capturing the full context and complexity of FOCUS Toronto, a large, multi-sectoral and long-standing initiative. Capturing greater context and complexity would require following the initiative more closely over the past 10 years of its existence rather than undertaking a point in time evaluation.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

This impact evaluation shows that FOCUS Toronto has achieved most of its intended goals and objectives. The initiative is as relevant today as when it was established, continuing to contribute to SafeTO: A Community Safety & Well-Being Plan². It has positively improved the lives of over 10,000 people supported through over 6,000 situations in an 11-year span. FOCUS Toronto has and is expected to continue with strong operational sustainability given its track record and emphasis on continuous quality improvement.

FOCUS Toronto's success and impact can be attributed to the following:

- FOCUS Toronto's growth has been diligently managed and FOCUS Toronto has been sustained as a stable operation due to the leadership of its three founding partners: Toronto Police Service, City of Toronto, and United Way of Greater Toronto. These partners have passionately driven the development and growth of FOCUS Toronto into what it is today.
- The Coordination Team and Situation Table Co-Chairs efficiently and effectively operate seven tables across the GTA. Partner agencies collaborate not only at Situation Table meetings but are beginning to make direct referrals and continue to collaborate outside table meetings.
- There has been the development of a greater awareness amongst agencies of their respective programs and services, more efficient and effective agency service coordination, and a high success rate in connecting most people referred to services.
- Impact stories from individuals who have been supported by FOCUS Toronto demonstrate that their safety and wellbeing has been improved, not only by being connected to services, but once they are connected, with agencies instilling a sense of empowerment and hope with their care and providing advocacy and ongoing follow-up.
- FOCUS Toronto continued to seek opportunities for improvement through evaluations of this kind and focused research studies, as well as adding resources to support its expansion.

Key opportunities for FOCUS Toronto to further increase its impact include the following:

- Further optimizing various Situation Table processes for effectiveness and efficiency. Areas include Acute Elevated Risk definitions, privacy and confidentiality, agency participation, direct referrals, supporting culturally sensitive and priority populations, and following up with people who are challenging to reach and serve.
- Developing a robust performance measurement framework founded on a more robust Theory of Change, Logic Model and quantitative and qualitative metrics/measures, and gathering yearly data

² "SafeTO: A Community Safety & Well-Being Plan" can be found at <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/public-safety-alerts/community-safety-programs/community-safety-well-being-plan/>

from individuals, agencies and others to better demonstrate the impact of FOCUS Toronto on a consistent basis.

- Establishing a 10-year impact vision for FOCUS Toronto and identifying the strategies, structures and resources required to achieve this vision (i.e., to effectively contribute to research, policy and advocacy at the provincial and federal levels, to remove partner agency capacity constraints).

Overall, the findings of this evaluation indicate that FOCUS Toronto continues to be a highly successful, mature initiative and it is expected that its success will be sustained in the future. The key question for FOCUS Toronto partners now is: “How can FOCUS Toronto make an even greater impact over the next 10 years?” Answering this question will require some deliberate strategic thinking to understand FOCUS Toronto’s unique value proposition, what success looks like, key levers and barriers to success, and the collaborations and dedicated resources that would be invested to achieve this next level of impact.

Recommendations

Below is a summary of the recommendations made throughout this evaluation report.

Structure	<i>FOCUS Toronto Governance, Leadership, and Management</i> 1. Implement leadership structures and processes that can advance long term solutions to systemic issues with other orders of government. 2. Review and refine FOCUS Toronto’s vision, mission, values and overarching strategies/goals for the coming 10 years. 3. Better define FOCUS Toronto’s unique value proposition to Toronto’s Community Safety and Wellbeing plan in the context of other planning tables and collective impact initiatives. <i>Partner Agency Participation</i> 4. Recruit additional partners to Situation Tables including public health, mental health, hospital and housing partners. 5. Deepen the focus on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) by securing additional partners with expertise in serving diverse populations. 6. Strengthen partner attendance and engagement. <i>Resourcing</i> 7. Invest resources in policy and advocacy work, including the gathering and sharing of impact stories on a routine basis. 8. Secure access to translation resources.
Processes	<i>FOCUS Toronto Processes</i> <i>Policies, Protocols, Tools, Cultural Appropriateness</i> 9. Establish guidance for direct referrals outside of Situation Tables. 10. Review Acutely Elevated Risk (AER) definition and processes and determine actions regarding situations of chronically elevated risk. 11. Strengthen cultural competency through focused discussions, training and accountability (related to Recommendations #5 and #8).

	12. Strengthen the role of the referral agency in interventions to improve ability to connect with clients. 13. Advance the application of privacy and information sharing policies and processes to specific situations (families, language barriers, longer term situations). <i>Referrals and Types of Situations</i> 14. Formalize a referral process with SPIDER for complex, chronic situations. 15. Establish a process for routinely reviewing the populations served by FOCUS Toronto to identify priority populations that FOCUS Toronto can best serve. <i>Interventions</i> 16. Strengthen partner agency engagement as lead and assisting agencies (related to Recommendation #25). 17. Improve time to first contact. 18. Provide translation/interpretation supports (related to Recommendation #8). 19. Develop a standard for case length that aligns with FOCUS Toronto’s mandate, populations served and agency capacity. 20. Strengthen follow up processes for people who cannot be reached or who refused consent. 21. Strengthen processes for responding to chronic and complex risk situations (related to Recommendation #14). <i>Continuous Quality Improvement</i> 22. Develop and use a continuous quality improvement approach and strengthened accountability agreements for partner agencies. 23. Establish a Performance Management Framework based on an updated Theory of Change, Logic Model and set of process and outcomes measures and targets. 24. Develop an approach to regularly assess client satisfaction/experience and outcomes (related to Recommendation #7).
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Impact on Partner Agencies</i> 25. Examine and address agency involvement and capacity challenges at each Situation Table (related to Recommendation #16). 26. Formalize and implement a direct referrals process. 27. Develop and routinely use a standard method for gathering information from partner agencies to support increased collaboration and commitment. 28. Share the positive impacts of FOCUS Toronto with partner agencies, demonstrating the impact that they have made. <i>Impact on Individuals and Families</i> 29. Clarify approach with family members of individuals being supported by FOCUS Toronto. 30. Develop and use a standardized method for gathering information about the experiences of individuals and families.

	31. Create a dedicated process to better support people experiencing complex and chronically elevated situations. <i>Impact on Community Safety & Well-Being</i> 32. Establish a set of feasible outcome measures and performance metrics for safety and wellbeing. 33. Create an approach to advocate for systemic change (related to Recommendations #1 and #21).
<i>Growth & Sustainability</i>	34. Identify strategies that will prevent situations from returning to FOCUS Toronto with same risk. 35. Shift from an operational focus on scaling to a strategic focus to deepen FOCUS Toronto's impact while sustaining its operations. 36. Actively work to influence public policy (related to Recommendations #1, #7, #21 and 24).

1.0 Background

1.1 About FOCUS Toronto

Furthering Our Community by Uniting Services Toronto (FOCUS Toronto) is an innovative multi-sectoral Community Safety and Well-Being Initiative that aims to reduce crime, victimization and improve community resiliency and wellbeing. FOCUS Toronto is co-led by City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, and Toronto Police Service.

FOCUS Toronto is comprised of seven Situation Tables³ across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). FOCUS Rexdale was the first Situation Table launched in 2013 and over the past 11 years, six other tables have been established. Hundreds of partner agencies serving residents living in each of the seven communities have connected over 10,000 individuals, families and places to services, thereby contributing to improving community safety and wellbeing.

FOCUS Toronto was created and scaled up based on the lessons learned by the first Situation Table of this kind in Canada that was established in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Since then, FOCUS Toronto has incorporated learnings from other Situation Tables that have been set up across Ontario (over 60), and initiatives such as the Community Crisis Response Program. The expansion of FOCUS Toronto is a key initiative of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy and the Safe TO: A Community Safety & Well-Being Plan, established by the City of Toronto in 2022.

Vision

- To see an innovative, adaptable and collaborative risk-driven service delivery system that is responsive to the diverse needs of all residents of Toronto striving together for a safer Toronto.

Mission

- FOCUS Toronto will collaboratively leverage diverse resources and innovate the partners' business practices to improve community safety and wellbeing.

Values

All of FOCUS Toronto's activities and practices will uphold the principles of:

- Collaboration – Leverage collective expertise and resources to make a better Toronto.
- Accountability –We are accountable to each other, community partners, residents and other system partners.
- Innovation – Our organizations will change to make Toronto better and will challenge others to do the same.
- Respect –We will honour our organizational and individual strengths and support each other in weakness.
- Courage – Challenges always come with change. We will courageously face them all together.

FOCUS Toronto Goals

- Increase community safety and wellbeing in specific neighbourhoods of Toronto

³ A seventh table, introduced late in 2024, was not in scope for this evaluation.

- Build on and sustain collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders
- Increase capacity building for, and with, FOCUS Toronto neighbourhoods
- Identify individuals, families, or groups in FOCUS Toronto neighbourhoods who are at elevated risk of harm, victimization or offending
- Respond immediately to these situations with coordinated and integrated intervention composed of the right blend of technical capabilities and service capacities
- Encourage and support systemic reform and innovation, improved collaboration in social services, and social development that will have a sustainable effect on community safety, security, and wellbeing
- Increase knowledge and awareness of social needs and solutions in FOCUS Toronto neighbourhoods.

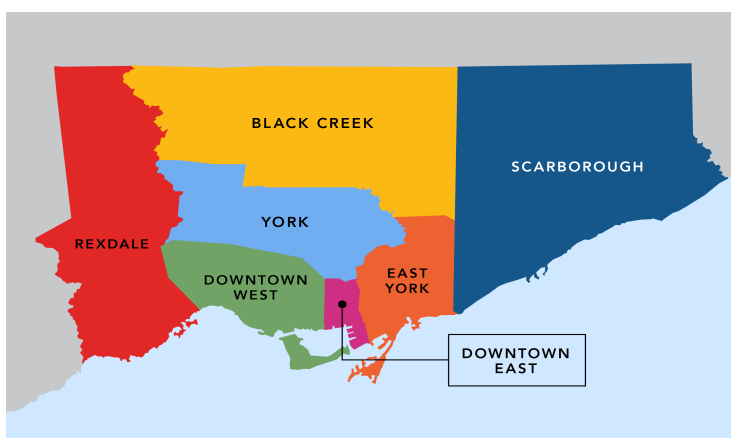
How FOCUS Toronto Operates

FOCUS Toronto operates under the guidance of a Steering Committee and is managed by a Coordination Team. Its core operations revolve around weekly Situation Table meetings, where partner agencies⁴ from various sectors—including policing/justice, mental health, healthcare, housing, education, and social services—collaborate. These meetings aim to develop targeted, wraparound approaches to support the most vulnerable individuals, families, and locations facing **acutely elevated risk**⁵ (AER) within a specific geographic area

FOCUS Toronto is led by a Steering Committee, along with a team of staff who carry out day to day activities. Core operations involve weekly Situation Table meetings that include community agencies representing several sectors including but not limited to policing/justice, mental health, health, housing, education and social services. At these meetings, targeted, wrap around approaches are determined to connect the most vulnerable individuals, families and places that are experiencing AER in a specific geographic location.

Figure 1. FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables

FOCUS Toronto is comprised of seven tables⁶ across the GTA as shown in Figure 1. The first table, FOCUS Rexdale began operating in 2013, followed by FOCUS Downtown East, FOCUS Downtown West and FOCUS Scarborough in 2016, FOCUS Black Creek in 2019, FOCUS York in 2021, and FOCUS East York in 2024.



⁴ **Partner agencies** refers to those organizations that have representatives attending weekly Situation Table meetings. Section 3.2.2 contains a list of these agencies.

⁵ As defined in the Terms of Reference for FOCUS, **acutely elevated risk** refers to any situation impinging on individuals, families, groups, or places where circumstances indicate an extremely high probability of victimization from crime or social disorder. Left untended, such situations will require targeted enforcement or other emergency responses. The acute nature of these situations is an indicator that either chronic conditions have accumulated to the point of imminent crisis, or new circumstances have contributed to severely increased risks of victimization.

1.2 Purpose of this Evaluation

During the fall of 2024, Vision & Results Inc. in collaboration with SN Management was engaged through a competitive procurement process to undertake an Impact Evaluation of FOCUS Toronto. The purpose of the Impact Evaluation is to assess the achievement of outcomes - how FOCUS Toronto has affected its intended recipients, the clients, partner agencies, and the service delivery system in the medium and long-terms. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Examine how FOCUS Toronto was established, developed and grew across Toronto given the range of priority communities (e.g., community prioritization, leadership, membership, etc.).
- Assess FOCUS Toronto's governance structure, leadership, and management.
- Examine FOCUS Toronto Situation Table operations (e.g., executive sponsorship, partner agency participation, orientation and training, collaboration, interventions, R&E, administrative support, resourcing etc.).
- Examine FOCUS Toronto's processes (e.g., awareness building, policies and procedures, data and information, etc.).
- Describe the outcomes or impact of FOCUS on clients, partner agencies, FOCUS areas/neighborhood and the Toronto (e.g., connection to services, satisfaction, reduced risk, quality of life/lived experience, collaboration, capacity-building, contribute to system reform, etc.) and describe the extent to which FOCUS has made a difference. Unintended consequences were also identified.
- Identify the individual, Situation Table, organizational and systemic level strengths/facilitators and barriers that affect the achievement of the desired goals of FOCUS Toronto (e.g., coordination, wait lists, funding, agency silos, lack of culturally appropriate services, etc.).
- Capture the lessons learned by FOCUS Toronto to inform continuous quality improvement, sustainability, growth and impact.

In 2014, Vision & Results Inc. completed a formative evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale in 2016 (after its first three years of operations) and subsequently also designed a Theory of Change to support the establishment of FOCUS Toronto. While it has been several years, the findings of that evaluation and the subsequent development of the Theory of Change were drawn upon to during this Impact Evaluation to assess the progress of FOCUS Toronto over the past decade.

To understand the conditions and factors that may have influenced the extent to which FOCUS Toronto has had an impact, key components of an updated FOCUS Toronto logic model were examined during this evaluation:

- History and trajectory of the growth of FOCUS Toronto and its sustainability.
- Alignment with values and principles including reconciliation and equity (R&E).
- Structure (i.e., governance, management and operations).
- Processes (i.e., outputs such as Situation Table referrals, collaboration, service connections, service provision, client follow-up, continuous quality improvement).

- Outcomes (i.e., short, medium and long-term impact on clients, agencies, sector partners neighborhoods/communities and systems).

2.0 Methodology

This evaluation involved four phases of activity: 1) developing the Evaluation Plan including updating the logic model, 2) collecting data, 3) analyzing and interpreting data and information, and 4) reporting findings and recommendations. The FOCUS Toronto Steering Committee, Evaluation Committee, and Coordination Team were involved throughout the entire evaluation process, from the design of the evaluation plan and Logic Model to providing data and information and receiving the findings and recommendations to validate information and clarify any areas before this Final Report was finalized.

2.1 Evaluation Plan

A comprehensive Evaluation Plan was developed with the input of the FOCUS Toronto Evaluation and Steering Committees. The Evaluation Plan included the logic model for FOCUS Toronto, evaluation objectives, criteria and questions, and the evaluation methodology. Data collection tools with specific questions for each of the groups of evaluation participants were also designed and approved by the committees before their use. The FOCUS Toronto logic model and key evaluation questions are provided below for context. The full Evaluation Plan is available under separate cover.

2.1.1 Logic Model

Evaluations are used to assess whether an initiative has achieved its intended results using the dedicated inputs/resources. Results include both outputs (process indicators) and outcomes (impact indicators). The logic model that was used to guide the evaluation of FOCUS Toronto is shown in Figure 1. This logic model which was originally developed in 2013 for FOCUS Rexdale was updated for FOCUS Toronto at the outset of this evaluation in collaboration with the Coordination Team and Evaluation Committee. Specific evaluation questions were developed to assess FOCUS Toronto's *structure, processes, and outcomes*⁷.

- **Structure** pertains to the various human, financial, and information resources used to govern, lead, manage and operate FOCUS Toronto.
- **Processes** refer to the activities that FOCUS Toronto carried out to implement and evaluate the initiative. The evaluators examined **outputs** produced by these processes such as orientation/training, referrals, service connections, data monitoring, continuous quality improvement, etc.
- **Outcomes** are the intended impacts for service recipients - individuals, their family members, partners and the places in which FOCUS operates.

⁷ A simplified SIPOC (Stakeholders, Inputs, and Outcomes logic model framework was developed.

Table 1. FOCUS Toronto Logic Model

Inputs/ Resources	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes (1-2 years)	Medium Term Outcomes (3-5 years)	Long-Term Outcomes (5+ years)
- Community & Safety Well-Being Plan & Related Plans - FOCUS Toronto Coordination Team - Situation Table Co-Chairs and Agency Staff - System Partnerships - Funding - Situation Table Database	- FOCUS Toronto Coordination Team Support, Development, Monitoring - Situation Table Formation - Orientation/onboarding - Situation Table Meetings - Data reporting, monitoring, learning - Periodic evaluation	- Situation Table includes the appropriate agencies - Agencies understand the Situation Table's role, processes and desired outputs/outcomes - AER situations are being referred to the table - Improved collaboration amongst agencies to address situations of AER - Clients are connected to services in a timely manner - Clients are connected to services that are effective in addressing their risk factors - Clients are satisfied with the support they received	- Greater awareness in FOCUS communities of how to refer/connect to Situation Table - Greater/stable partner agency participation at FOCUS - Consistent referrals to Situation Table - Most referrals to Situation Table meet the criteria - Situation Table processes are effective and efficient - Situation Table interventions are effective - Collaboration and coordination of services by partner agencies within and beyond FOCUS Toronto - Clients continue to be supported outside of FOCUS Toronto - FOCUS Toronto uses its data to identify and respond to opportunities for improving the effectiveness of its approaches - FOCUS Toronto partners collaboratively identify and address systemic issues	- Incidents of AER, harms and victimization sustainably reduced and prevented - Increased community safety, security, and wellbeing in specific FOCUS Toronto neighbourhoods - Sustained collaborative, ongoing partnerships among all stakeholders beyond FOCUS - FOCUS is a value for money initiative given its benefit to clients and neighborhoods

2.1.2 Evaluation Domains and Questions

The following evaluation domains⁸ are used for evaluating all types of initiatives.

- **Relevance** – The inherent value of FOCUS in addressing a need.
- **Effectiveness** – The alignment between the stated aims of FOCUS and its actual results.
- **Efficiency** – The extent to which FOCUS is allocating and using its resources and funds effectively to achieve the intended results.
- **Sustainability** – The long-term ability and operational capacity of FOCUS to continue delivering against its goals.

These domains were drawn upon to help identify and group evaluation questions for the FOCUS Toronto evaluation.

Structure and Governance – Is FOCUS Toronto organized, engaged with stakeholders, and resourced to achieve the goals and objectives?

- Is the governance of FOCUS Toronto effective and efficient?
- Are the leadership, management and operations of FOCUS Toronto effective and efficient?
- Is the composition of agencies involved in FOCUS Toronto effective?
- Have FOCUS values and Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (R&EDI) principles been addressed in all aspects of the structure?
- Are the appropriate accountability mechanisms in place?
- Are FOCUS Toronto resources being used in the right places?

Processes – Are FOCUS Toronto processes effective, efficient and implemented to achieve the goals and objectives?

- Are the processes and procedures used to set-up and implement FOCUS Toronto effective and efficient?
- Is FOCUS using an R&EDI and trauma-informed lens in all of its processes?
- Are the appropriate agencies participating on an ongoing basis in FOCUS Toronto?
- Are FOCUS Toronto policies, protocols and tools effective and efficient?
- Are the situations being brought to FOCUS Toronto representative of neighborhood profiles? Are they situations of AER?
- Are Situation Table meetings effective and efficient?
- Are interventions timely? Are interventions coordinated?
- Does FOCUS Toronto measure its performance, continuously improve and report on its work?

Outcomes – What is the impact of FOCUS Toronto?

- Has collaboration amongst all stakeholders been built and strengthened over time?
- Is there increased and improved service coordination?
- Has communication between FOCUS Toronto and existing community networks increased?
- Are the right number of AER situations coming to FOCUS?

⁸ The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) first laid out the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) in the 1991 OECD DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance and later defined the terms in the 2002 Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. These criteria have come to serve as the core reference for evaluating publicly funded programs, including by the Government of Canada. See <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/evaluation-government-canada/evaluation-101-backgrounder.html#toc>

- Are clients and family members satisfied? Was their experience positive?
- Have FOCUS interventions improved outcomes for clients? Has risk been reduced for clients after connection to services and over time?
- Has community safety, security and wellbeing increased?

Relevance and Sustainability/Expansion – Is FOCUS Toronto relevant, viable and scalable in the long-run?

- To what extent has FOCUS Toronto been continuously improved using lessons learned?
- Has the development of each FOCUS Toronto Situation Table in various neighborhoods been effective and efficient?
- Has the FOCUS Toronto expansion been effective and efficient?
- How can the outcomes of FOCUS Toronto be sustained?
- Is the FOCUS Toronto initiative aligned with public policy and priorities and integrated and synergistic with other related initiatives? Does the human service sector collaborate with and support FOCUS Toronto?
- Is FOCUS Toronto influencing public policy?
- Is the cost of FOCUS reasonable in relation to the benefits?

Systemic Enablers/Barriers – What are the key enablers or barriers to achieving FOCUS Toronto outcomes?

- What are factors affecting individuals/families, neighborhoods and the city to achieve goals, objectives and outcomes?
- What are the best practices for achieving the goals, objectives and outcomes and how have they been implemented in the service system?
- The table which follows describes the indicators that are being collected to answer the questions and the diverse perspectives that will can provide evidence regarding the indicator.

2.2 Data Collection

The evaluators used a mixed-methods approach to collect data for the evaluation. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in this impact evaluation resulted in a more comprehensive and nuanced examination of the outcomes/impact of FOCUS Toronto.

Figure 2 shows the various data collection methods that were originally planned to gather and review quantitative and qualitative data. Regarding the storybooks and interviews, significant effort was made, via partner agency warm contacts with individuals who have been supported by FOCUS Toronto, to increase participation. In addition, an honorarium was offered to clients who participated. Each Situation Table was asked to distribute as many storybooks and the focus group schedule to as many individuals as possible in efforts to achieve the targets for client/family participation shown in Table 2. As will be discussed in the limitations section of this report, gathering information directly from individuals who have been supported by FOCUS Toronto has been challenging.

Table 2. FOCUS Toronto – Planned Data Collection Methods and Targeted Number of Participants

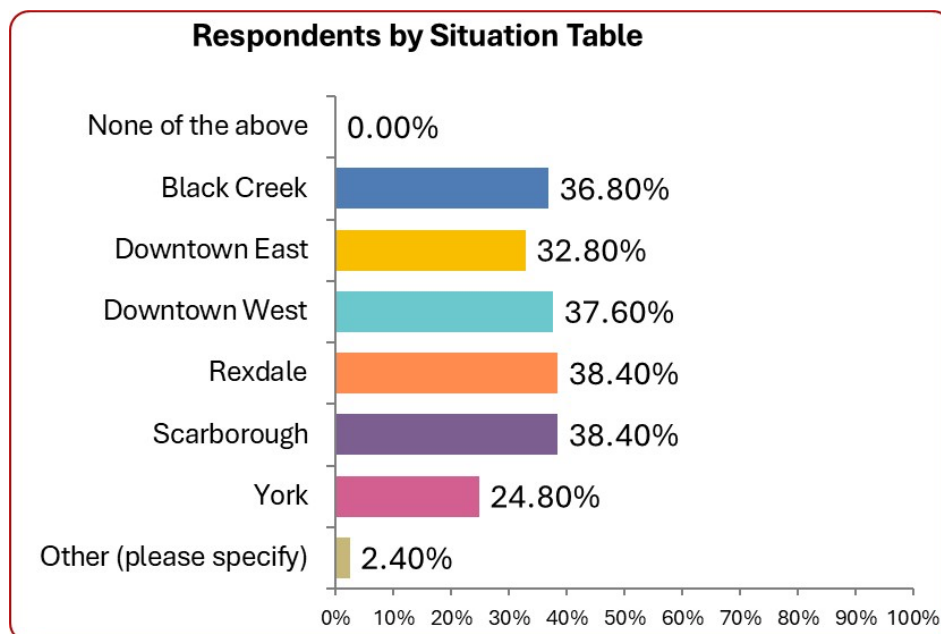
Data Source	Data Collection Method			
	Document Review	Survey	Interviews	Focus Groups
Coordination Team	Review interim and final plans, presentations and reports	Anonymous Partner Survey	Interview with each member of the team	
Evaluation Advisory Committee		Anonymous Partner Survey		Focus Groups
Situation Table Co-Chairs		Anonymous Partner Survey	Individual and/or group interviews with the City of Toronto Co-Chairs and TPS Co-Chairs	
Agencies Participating in Weekly ST Meetings	Review of Situation Table documents pertaining to partners (i.e., MOUs, etc.)	Anonymous Partner Survey		90-minute focus group with each of the six Situation Tables
Other Stakeholders			Up to 10 interviews with other key stakeholders	
ST Clients & Families	Up to 12 Storybooks per Situation Table Review of Situation Table data base		Up to 2 interviews per Situation Table	

The efforts undertaken by all involved to communicate, arrange and coordination the above data collection methods resulted in the following data and information being used for this evaluation:

- **Documents:** The evaluators reviewed 26 FOCUS Toronto program documents, protocols, and tools, as well as reports on and evaluations of similar programs including an evaluation previously completed by another third party. A list of the documents reviewed is found in Appendix A.
- **Situation Table Data:** The evaluators reviewed and analyzed the database of information collected by FOCUS between January 2013 - November 2024 for six of the Situation Tables, not including East York.

- **Survey:** The evaluators developed and administered a 17-question, 30-item survey to representatives of partner agencies. The survey was administered before the focus groups so that those meetings could be used to elaborate on the results. The survey was sent to approximately 600 people, with

Figure 2. Survey Response Rate by Situation Table



about 50 email bounce backs. One hundred and fifty-six (156) completed surveys were received (26% response rate). As seen in Figure 2, the response rates were fairly evenly distributed among the six tables (32% -38%), with slightly fewer responses from York (24%). The survey tool, along with other data collection tools, can be found in Appendix C.

- **Client Storybooks and Interviews:** To obtain insight into the impact of FOCUS Toronto on individuals, families and the community, the evaluators designed a “Your Story Matters” storybook template that was distributed by Situation Table Co-Chairs to their respective tables for agencies to in turn, distribute to individuals to complete.

An orientation session was provided to Situation Table Co-Chairs to review the storybook administration process. Each Situation Table’s partner agencies were asked to reach up to 12 people to complete the storybooks and 2 clients to complete interviews. The evaluators requested that there be a mix of individuals approached with recent and longer-term involvement in FOCUS Toronto, of various age ranges, gender and/or ethnic identities, and people who had experienced various types of risk. To ensure these criteria were met, potential evaluation participants were vetted and confirmed by the UWGT.

People who wished to be interviewed instead of completing a storybook self-scheduled to meet with the evaluators. UWGT administered this process and followed UWGT Client Engagement Guidelines and Ethics policies including for consent, anonymity of participation, data storage and Honoria (\$50 per person) distribution. A total of 13 individuals participated in the evaluation – eight storybooks were submitted, and five interviews were completed. The storybook template and client interview

guide, along with other data collection tools, can be found in Appendix C. Summary information collected from clients is presented in Appendix D.

- **Situation Table Focus Groups:** Six focus groups with Situation Table members the representatives of community agencies were conducted. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with several representatives of partner agencies. Six focus groups were conducted with a total of 48 people participants. The focus group guide, along with other data collection tools, can be found in Appendix C.
- **Additional interviews:** 18 interviews were conducted with members of the Steering Committee and Coordination Team and the FOCUS Coordinator, the Situation Table Co-Chairs, and subject matter experts from TPS and the City of Toronto and John Howard Society. A list of these individuals is found in Appendix B, and the interview guide in Appendix C along with other data collection tools.

The information collection tools, including semi-structured interview and focus group guides, the survey, and the storybook templates were developed and vetted with the Coordination Team and Evaluation Committee prior to their use.

2.3 Data Analysis & Interpretation

Data Analysis

Data collected using methods outlined above were synthesized and triangulated to arrive at key findings and opportunities outcomes and impact for consideration. Where possible, comparisons were made year to year and between the various Situation Tables both with the quantitative and qualitative data. Where possible, the evaluators compared these findings to identify convergent or divergent patterns and insights.

For the storybooks, an analysis was completed of the stories provided to identify key themes regarding the impact that FOCUS Toronto has had on the lives of individuals and/or family members. Where relevant and available, this report includes verbatim quotations from individuals who submitted a storybook or participated in an interview.

2.4 Reporting

This report presents findings regarding FOCUS' strengths and opportunities for enhancing communication, driving continuous quality improvement and promoting growth and sustainability. Recommendations for FOCUS Toronto are also offered in this report along with strategic questions for the future.

Interim findings and the Draft Final Report were presented to the Coordination Team and Steering Committee to validate the accuracy of the data gathered and clarify findings and recommendations before the Final Report was produced and delivered.

2.5 Challenges & Limitations

There were some challenges encountered during this evaluation and limitations that should be noted. These primarily relate to the type of data available and the scope of the evaluation.

- **Limited quantitative analysis:** The FOCUS database contains over 10,000 records of individuals, family members and places that have been connected to services over the past 11 years. Given the limited

time and funding for this evaluation, the evaluators relied on the UWGT to provide various pivot tables and snapshots of the data to describe the activities, outputs and impact of FOCUS Toronto over time, and to compare the results across Situation Tables.

Advanced statistical analysis and testing for significance was not completed to analyze the data to determine patterns such as changes over time and the correlation of various factors. Instead, the evaluators relied on the frequency data provided by FOCUS Toronto to directionally determine whether there were any major differences in data points year over year since 2013 across Situation Tables, and over time at each Situation Table. Furthermore, completing 'return on investment' or other economic analyses were outside the scope of this evaluation. As will be discussed later in this report, FOCUS Toronto, as a group may benefit from designing specific research studies.

- **Limited impact data:** Data routinely collected by FOCUS Toronto is currently limited to outputs (process measures) as FOCUS Toronto does not complete a routine follow-up with individuals after the AER situation is mitigated. Moreover, while this evaluation executed a solid plan to reach out to 50 individuals via each Situation Tables and their lead agencies to participate via an interview or completion of a storybook, only 13 people agreed to participate. As with other evaluations involving vulnerable and transient populations, reaching individuals long after their participation in a program can be challenging. Nonetheless, the evaluators were able to identify common themes from these stories that illustrate the impact of FOCUS Toronto on individuals and their families.

With respect to partner agency impact data, the evaluators conducted a survey and focus groups to understand how FOCUS Toronto may have affected their effectiveness and efficiency. The findings indicate that there is more research to be done in this area to understand the barriers and facilitators to collaboration, improving capacity, and increasing effectiveness. Organizational and system level factors are particularly interesting to explore as FOCUS Toronto has primarily focused on the individual level of analysis.

With respect to community-level impact, FOCUS Toronto would benefit from defining and measuring what constitutes impact. Reducing risk and having fewer calls appears to be used as a proxy for community safety, however, FOCUS Toronto has not defined wellbeing outcomes. As will be discussed throughout this report, it is recommended that FOCUS Toronto further advance the Theory of Change and Logic Model to include specific outcomes and measurable indicators at the individual, team, organization and system levels and develop a performance measurement framework. Doing so will increase FOCUS Toronto's capacity to measure its progress, understand the barriers and facilitators to achieving planned outcomes and demonstrate its impact. This work could also inform the evolution of the FOCUS Toronto strategy and model including how it collaborates with other groups to advocate and influence policy and funding decisions that can help to achieve Toronto's common aim of community safety and wellbeing.

- **Define the limits of FOCUS Toronto:** It became clear during this impact evaluation (versus during formative or process evaluations) that there needs to be greater clarity regarding the 'accountability ceiling' of FOCUS Toronto and its expected impact. Specifically, it is unclear whether FOCUS Toronto's impact should be measured primarily by the successful reduction of risk and connection of people to services, or whether additional outcomes such as safety and wellbeing are also expected from FOCUS Toronto. These factors could be outside of the control of FOCUS. For example, partner agency

capacity, delivery and quality are not the accountability of FOCUS Toronto but rather of delivery agencies and their funders.

It would benefit FOCUS Toronto leaders to work on defining the ‘Sphere of Control’, ‘Sphere of Influence’ and ‘Sphere of Interest’ and determining what activities, outputs and impacts would fall within each Sphere⁹. In the ‘Sphere of Control’ is the impact of specific Situation Table activities on individuals. In the Sphere of Influence, FOCUS Toronto could use its data to influence decisions outside of its control such as whether the individual consents to participating, and system barriers within organizations or the system (and hence whether individuals receive service and have an improved quality of life) but on the other hand there are many external factors that are not under its control. Defining the ‘Sphere of Interest’ or the long-lasting structural changes that FOCUS Toronto would like to see happen but in fact cannot specifically influence helps to define the ‘Accountability Ceiling’. Having greater clarity about these spheres (and how they might evolve over time) will enable FOCUS Toronto partners to better define and demonstrate its impact – where its work starts and stops and where others need to be involved and are accountable.

- **Context and complexity:** The evaluators strived to capture as much of the context and dynamic and evolving nature of FOCUS Toronto and its growth and development over the past 11 years. While both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered, evaluation participants had a limited ability and capacity to recount all the context and complexity of FOCUS Toronto, and for each Situation Table over the past decade. Similarly, some individuals who were connected to services by FOCUS Toronto were in touch two years ago. Responses are therefore based on recollection and are subject to recall bias. This report aims to strike a balance in providing enough contextual information, quantitative findings, and stories to inform directional findings and recommendations.

2.6 Organization of This Report

The remainder of this report contains the following sections:

- **Section 3.0 – Outcomes:** Strengths (what is working) and opportunities (for improvement) about FOCUS Toronto’s 1) structures, 2) processes, and 3) outcomes are described. Evaluation questions and background information are provided for each sub-section.
- **Section 4.0 – Recommendations:** Summary of the overall recommendations and list of detailed recommendations.
- **Section 5.0 – Future Considerations:** A high-level implementation plan with recommendations for the short-, medium-, and long-term. Strategic questions for the Steering Committee to contemplate.
- **Section 6.0 – Conclusion:** Final remarks on the findings of the evaluation.

⁹ Circles or spheres of Influence is a term that originated in the field of social psychology. The term was first introduced by psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. Similar terms include: Circles of Concern and Influence, Sphere of Influence, Circle of Power, and Circle of Trust. Source: <https://realgoodcenter.jou.ufl.edu/framework/the-six-spheres-of-influence-2/>. In the context of service and systems planning, this framework is helpful in describing areas or “spheres of control” where an organization/initiative has complete control and can make direct decisions. The “sphere of influence” encompasses areas where the organization/initiative can still have an impact through its relationships, partnerships, and advocacy, while the “sphere of concern” includes areas beyond direct control and influence, which still affect the organization and the wider society, such as the human resources shortages, availability of housing and income inequality. The framework can be drawn upon to help to organize FOCUS strategies or interventions into those that it can directly be in control of, versus those that it can influence, for example through collaboration or advocacy.

3.0 Findings

3.1 FOCUS Toronto Structure

This section examines the FOCUS Toronto structure in terms of 1) governance, leadership and management; 2) the partner agencies involved in FOCUS; and 3) how resources have been used to develop and manage the initiative.

3.1.1 Governance, Leadership and Management

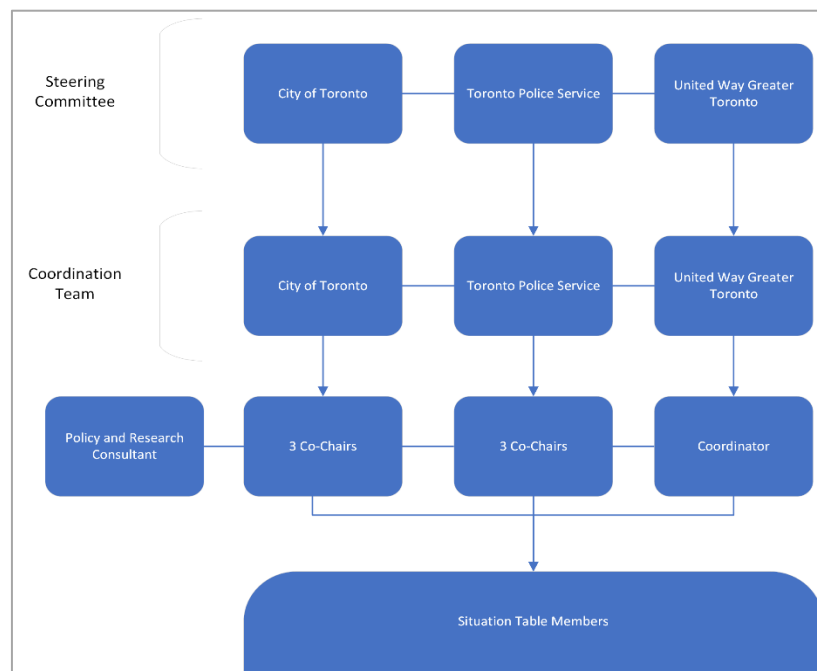
Evaluation Questions

- Is the governance of FOCUS Toronto effective and efficient?
- Are the leadership and management of FOCUS Toronto effective and efficient?
- Are the appropriate accountability mechanisms in place?

Background

A Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (Partnership MOU) has been established by the sponsor organizations, the UWGT, City of Toronto and the TPS, which sets out roles and responsibilities regarding the governance, management and operations of FOCUS Toronto.

Figure 3. FOCUS Toronto Structure



As seen in the FOCUS Toronto Organization Structure (Figure 3), governance for FOCUS Toronto is provided by the FOCUS Toronto Steering Committee, which is comprised of senior leaders from each of the sponsor organizations.

The Steering Committee meets on a quarterly basis and was established at the outset of FOCUS Toronto in 2012, to respond to operational barriers collectively and leverage strategic priorities and partnerships where appropriate.

The day-to-day management and operations of the FOCUS Toronto initiative is carried out by the Coordination Team, comprised of a representative from each of the lead/sponsor agencies. It is supported in its work by a Coordinator, from the UWGT and a Policy and Research Consultant from the City of Toronto. The Coordination Team is chiefly responsible for Co-Chair training and support, resource development, strategic planning, information management and advocacy.

The Co-Chairs are responsible for Situation Table operations. They prepare for and facilitate meetings, are responsible for agency outreach and partner recruitment and orientation. The number of co-chairs changes periodically; currently, three of the Co-Chairs are from the City of Toronto and four are from the TPS.

Strengths

Overall, the evaluation found that the leadership and management of FOCUS Toronto is effective and efficient.

Sustained tri-partite leadership: For more than ten years, the FOCUS sponsor organizations - TPS, City of Toronto and UWGT - have demonstrated sustained and shared leadership of FOCUS Toronto. Shared ownership of FOCUS Toronto is evidenced by each of the sponsor organizations prioritizing FOCUS Toronto within their organizations and putting in place defined resources structures and policies to enable and guide their organizational leadership of the initiative. Further, the commitment to FOCUS Toronto vision, goals and values has enabled the sponsor organizations to work through differences in organizational culture and deepen the strength of their collaboration with each other and their community partners over the past decade.

“Finally, the police realized that they cannot be alone in this game”

Interviewee (TPS representative)

“TPS and community agencies are working way better”

Interviewee (FOCUS sponsor agency)

“Backbone support provided by the City, United Way and TPS. This enables the hundreds of partners to respond”.

Interviewee

Managed and sustained growth: Over the past eleven years, the Steering Committee has incrementally scaled the FOCUS Toronto model across the City of Toronto, drawing upon evidence-based recommendations from the Coordination Team to sequence the roll out of the initiative. The FOCUS Toronto structure and operational model have been sustained over time including during the pandemic years.

Responsive to systemic issues: There is evidence that systemic issues have been identified at the Situation Tables and raised to the Steering Committee by the Coordination Team as found in various systemic issues reports that FOCUS has completed. The sponsor organizations in turn have responded with strategies aimed to mitigate these issues, often by aligning organizational investments with FOCUS Toronto identified priorities. For example, both TPS and the City responded to challenges that FOCUS Toronto tables were experiencing in terms of effective interventions for increasingly complex and hard to connect mental health situations. The City, through its funding streams directed a mental health organization to explicitly support FOCUS Toronto clients, while TPS initiated a collaborative mental health outreach initiative with Toronto Public Health (TPH) that is being aligned with FOCUS Toronto.

Dedicated and skilled Coordination Team: Key informants stated that the success of FOCUS Toronto is largely due to the passion, commitment, knowledge and skills of the Coordination Team. The TPS Coordination Team member has been a consistent asset to FOCUS Toronto since the beginning of the initiative and is recognized for his knowledge of Situation Tables, their policies and processes and FOCUS Toronto’s data. He plays a key role in monitoring and deepening TPS’ engagement including referrals, training within the TPS and promoting FOCUS Toronto through research and publications. Similarly, the

Coordination Team member from the UWGT is highly effective at ensuring that the tables are operating as smoothly as possible, reaching out to and engaging with existing and new service providers and monitoring and supporting partner agency engagement. He brings expertise with the FOCUS Toronto database and coordinates evaluations. The City of Toronto's Coordination Team member is newer to the initiative. However, he is experienced with all aspects of FOCUS Toronto and brings expertise with the Specialized Program for Interdivisional Enhance Responsiveness (SPIDER). Overall, the Coordination Team provides excellent leadership to FOCUS Toronto as evidenced by feedback and more concretely, the many years of the initiative's smooth operations and growth.

Effective and efficient Co-Chair function: Feedback from partner agencies and the evaluators' observations indicate that the Co-Chair arrangement for the Situation Table is working well and that the Co-Chairs are effective in carrying out their roles. The Co-Chairs keep meetings focused and action oriented. Some concern was expressed about lack of a consistent and fulsome City of Toronto Co-Chair team (i.e., resulting from staff departures, turnover, etc.) particularly during the pandemic, however, there appears to be more consistency at this time.

"Co-Chairs are awesome. I am baffled by how much knowledge they have"

Interviewee (TPS)

Effective day to day coordination and analytical support: A dedicated Coordinator, provided by the UWGT, effectively performs Situation Table support functions including capturing meeting actions, taking attendance, recording situations, tracking systemic issues and maintaining the project database. The Coordinator also communicates with partner agencies to confirm that they have followed through with actions from Situation Table meetings and to offer support as required. In addition, a Policy Analyst, provided by the City of Toronto, supports the Coordination Team and Steering Committee to analyze FOCUS Toronto data and develop reports that bring to light trends, issues and gaps.

Opportunities

Implement leadership structures and processes that can advance long term solutions to systemic issues with other orders of government: Since the launch of FOCUS Toronto, the Steering Committee has been apprised of systemic barriers and as noted above, sponsor agencies have helped FOCUS Toronto build its capacity to address these, for example by strengthening mental health capacity at the FOCUS tables. However, many of the key informants interviewed for the evaluation stated that the FOCUS Toronto has yet to put in place a structure and process for routinely leveraging FOCUS's extensive data base to identify priority issues, needs or gaps based on populations or geographies, and to use this data to advocate for long term systemic solutions.

One suggestion was that FOCUS Toronto form a cross-governmental table, modelled on Prince Albert's core table. In fact, the Partnership MOU references a ***"System Reform and Innovation Table on Vulnerability in Toronto"***, with responsibility for ***"driving system-level reforms that will increase the capacity of the City and its partners to respond effectively to complex health and safety risks involving vulnerable Torontonians, their homes or property, and their neighbours"***. Again, FOCUS Toronto partners have completed systemic barrier reports and met on two occasions with SPIDER to

"Regarding system pressures...FOCUS data needs to get to different provincial ministries. The leadership needs to do its bit regarding intergovernmental work"

Interviewee (key stakeholder)

identify and put in place recommendations for addressing systemic issues. However, these meetings do not take place regularly enough, nor are they inclusive of the different levels of government required to address the complex nature of systemic issues. It is strongly suggested the FOCUS Toronto build on its long history as a convenor of collaborative and cross-sectoral initiatives and establish a table that includes senior decision-makers from government ministries/divisions that are directly responsible for finding long term solutions to systemic issues impacting community safety and wellbeing.

Define unique value proposition to diverse populations experiencing risk: The landscape within which FOCUS Toronto operates has evolved considerably over the past ten years (i.e., increased prevalence of people experiencing chronic mental health concerns, homelessness and age-related conditions). However, FOCUS Toronto's approach has not changed significantly since it was launched. The FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables remain highly responsive, accepting and connecting more situations each year, despite limited capacity among the partner agencies to intake new clients and new/emerging service coordination tables in the community that may be working with the same/similar populations. There is an opportunity take a step back and purposefully define the population(s) that FOCUS Toronto (versus other tables in Toronto) can best serve.

Review and refine FOCUS Toronto's vision, mission, values and overarching strategies/goals for the coming 10 years: As noted, UWGT, TPS and the City of Toronto have worked closely together since the establishment of FOCUS Toronto. During this time, significant energy has been spent expanding operations - establishing additional Situation Tables, onboarding, training and securing partner agencies, and running weekly meetings. In addition, the evaluators have observed that FOCUS Toronto has built a robust and comprehensive client data base through routine data collection and data cleaning. Furthermore, from time to time, there have been efforts to complete specific research studies including analysis of systemic issues, direct referrals, and calls for TPS service. Now that FOCUS Toronto has achieved city-wide coverage, there is an opportunity to shift from an operational focus to one that is more strategic in nature where leadership reviews and refines the vision, mission and values for FOCUS Toronto. Additionally, there is an opportunity to identify and pursue intentional approaches for maximizing the knowledge, experience, data, relationships and influence that FOCUS Toronto has gained across the GTA and developing a 10-year strategy that articulates the initiatives specific contributions to community safety and wellbeing.

Specific opportunities that were identified during this evaluation include:

- Collaborate on the development of key research and policy papers to support collective advocacy efforts.
- Hold planning exercises to articulate the 10-year vision and strategy for FOCUS Toronto, identifying concrete goals for advancing its impact on community safety and wellbeing and subsequently updating the Theory of Change and logic model.
- Convene strategic meetings with relevant policy makers (i.e., at Ontario ministries) and integrated service delivery tables/initiatives to coordinate and advance common goals.
- Communicate FOCUS Toronto's successes to acknowledge and celebrate the efforts of partners, and sustain and grow partner interest, commitment and collaboration.

Without attention being paid to strategic planning, there is a risk that FOCUS Toronto's attention will remain on operations and the full potential of its impact not realized.

A Briefing Note with additional findings regarding each of the FOCUS sponsors/co-leads was provided to the sponsor agencies.

3.1.2 Partner Agency Participation

Evaluation Questions

- Is the composition of agencies involved in FOCUS Toronto effective?
- Have Equity and Reconciliation principles been addressed in all aspects of the structure?
- Are agencies participating on an ongoing basis in FOCUS Toronto?

Background

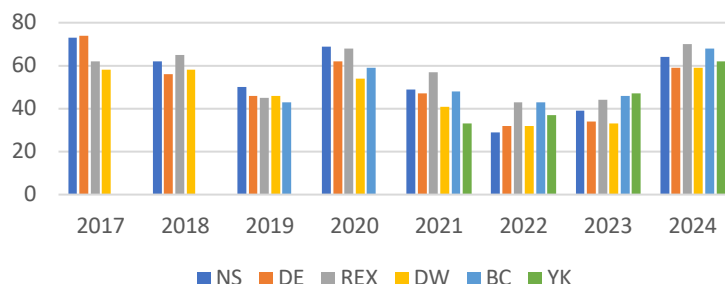
Over 150 organizations have signed a formal Partnership Agreement (Agreement) and are active partners of FOCUS Toronto. The Agreement has not changed significantly since FOCUS Toronto's inception. Upon signing the Agreement, each partner agency assigns one of their staff to participate consistently as their representative at the FOCUS Toronto Situation Table. Each partner agency also assigns a back-up representative should the primary representative be unavailable. In general, all partner agencies are empowered to nominate observed situations of acutely elevated risk for consideration by the Situation Table, support the Situation Table in deciding if nominated situations justify an early intervention involving any partner agency, and participate in the identified early intervention as a lead or assisting agency.

Strengths

Range and diversity of partner agencies: The 150+ agencies involved in FOCUS Toronto represent a broad and diverse range of human services sectors and include a mix of community-based, non-profit and non-governmental organizations as well as City of Toronto divisions and City of Toronto agencies. Ninety-four (94%) of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement ***“Our Focus Toronto Situation Tables involve the right agencies”***. Similarly feedback from focus group and interview participants indicates that FOCUS Toronto's key strength is its partnerships, and many recognize that FOCUS is the largest network of partner organizations in Toronto.

In addition, 94% of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, ***“Our Focus Situation Table reflects equity, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our structure and agency involvement”***. Similarly focus group participants noted that FOCUS Toronto has done a good job recruiting organizations that have the competencies required by the diverse populations served by the tables. Leadership indicates that there has been a greater attention paid to following up with people who identify as LGBTQ2S+

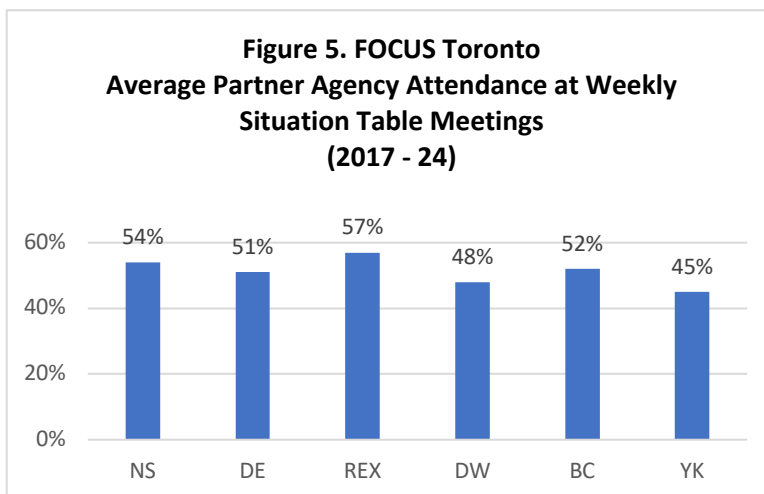
**Figure 4. FOCUS Toronto
% Partner Agency Attendance at Weekly
Situation Table Meetings
(2017-24)**



Sustained attendance at weekly meetings: As seen in Figure 4, since 2017, FOCUS Toronto has successfully been able to sustain the attendance of the partner agencies at weekly Situation Table meetings. Figure 4 indicates that average attendance dipped between 2017 and 2019 before returning to 2017 levels in 2020. Attendance again dipped between 2020 and 2022, the peak pandemic years, before returning to 2017 levels once again in 2024.

Figure 5 shows that the Situation Table with the highest average attendance across all years is Rexdale at 57% and lowest is York with 45%.

However, it should be noted that York has seen its average weekly attendance increased year over year since the table was established in 2021. Further, **98%** of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, **“My agency will continue to participate in the FOCUS Toronto initiative”**.



Partner agency recruitment and support: The FOCUS Toronto Co-Chairs have been pivotal in recruiting new agencies to the Situation Tables as they were introduced. They have developed and use several presentations to promote the initiative to agencies in the community and follow up with agencies to ensure that those engaged in an intervention are supported to do so in a timely manner. In addition, the Coordinator is seen as instrumental to supporting partner agency attendance at meetings and the Co-Chairs.

Opportunities

Recruit additional partners: The range and variety of partners was identified by all stakeholders as FOCUS Toronto’s greatest strength. At the same time, focus group and interview participants noted that there are not sufficient mental health and housing partners to address needs. In addition, survey respondents ranked **“Recruit new agencies to FOCUS Toronto to address unmet needs/gaps”** as the **most important requirement** for FOCUS to improve its day-to-day operations. It was suggested that FOCUS implement strategies to secure the regular participation of public health, key primary care and hospital providers, particularly emergency department (ED) representatives. While there are mental health and housing partners at the table, evaluation participants noted a need for additional resources in these areas to build up the tables’ capacity to respond to the increasing number of risk situations related to mental health and housing.

“We need” multiple agencies that deal with cultural considerations – Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+. (We are) always using the same agencies because they are on the call and we know them but there must be more”

Interviewee (TPS Co-Chair)

“(We need) more agencies that will assist with mental health, housing, youth support and elders/seniors so that we do not always have to lean on the same agencies”

Interviewee (TPS)

Deepen the focus on Equity and Reconciliation, by securing additional partners with expertise in serving diverse populations: At this time, gender, cultural and racial considerations are typically discussed during the presentation of situations at weekly meetings, and lead and supporting agencies try to connect people or families to organizations in the community that they believe are culturally sensitive. Nonetheless, evaluation participants suggested that FOCUS Toronto continue to build its EDI capacity by recruiting additional organizations that bring expertise in serving diverse, equity deserving populations and/or establish stronger referral linkages with these organizations.

Strengthen partner agency attendance and engagement:

Not all the agencies are consistently or actively participating at weekly meetings. The Partner Agreement makes explicit that agencies ***“Assign one of their most qualified professionals to act as back-up, should the primary member be unavailable to attend a FOCUS Toronto meeting.”*** However, data shows that partner agency attendance ranges from 45% to 57%. Feedback from evaluation participants indicates that lower levels of attendance at the tables creates barriers to information sharing, decision-making, team formation and timely responses to situations.

“The fact that (we) meet virtually has made things worse.”

“Got away from coordinating our responses effectively. Since we went virtual, we lost coordination effectiveness... need to trust the partners at the table”.

Focus group participants

At the same time, partner agencies note that their organizations are challenged with capacity limitations which impacts their ability to consistently participate in Situation Table meetings. The evaluators heard that some partners do not have the capacity to send back-up staff to meetings and, as their caseloads rise, they increasingly have less capacity to assume a lead agency or supporting agency function. Given this is a systemic challenge, there may be a need for the Steering Committee to identify strategies (i.e., completing cost analyses, advocacy, introducing funding streams) for securing additional resources to support partner agency attendance and participation.

It was also suggested by some focus group participants that more in-person meetings should be scheduled to strengthen relationships between partner agencies as a strategy for promoting engagement. Survey respondents identified ***“stronger engagement of partner agency” as the number one requirement for sustaining FOCUS over the long term.”***

3.1.3 Resources

Evaluation Question

- Are FOCUS Toronto resources being used in the right places?

Background

The lead agencies dedicate significant resources (staff and material) and time to lead, manage and operate FOCUS Toronto. Moreover, partner agencies have voluntarily dedicated staff time to identify and present AER situations, attend weekly Situation Table meetings, and follow-up on risk situations as either lead or supporting agencies.

Strengths

Appropriate use of time and resources: Feedback from the sponsor organizations indicates that the resources invested by their organizations, while significant are appropriate. FOCUS Toronto is seen not only as an efficient way to address AER but is recognized as a leading practice for other Situation Tables across Ontario that have been established to advance community safety and wellbeing.

Opportunities

Invest resources in policy and advocacy work: As discussed above, dedicating resources to advancing strategy and advocacy efforts would enable FOCUS Toronto to increase its impact, particularly in addressing systemic issues that are also faced by other sectors. This includes holding strategic discussions, developing key research and policy papers, convening discussions with other sector Ministries and leaders, and implementing a System Reform and Innovation Table on Vulnerability in Toronto. In addition, as will be discussed in Section 3.3, qualitative impact stories can be effective in demonstrating how FOCUS Toronto is contributing to community safety and wellbeing. These efforts require dedicated resourcing and specialized skilled sets in strategy, advocacy and policy.

Secure access to translation resources to help improve the effectiveness of FOCUS interventions: Focus groups participants frequently described that the lack language interpretation limits the impact of FOCUS Toronto interventions. It was suggested that a fund be created by FOCUS Toronto to create access to resources such as interpretation when it cannot be otherwise be secured by the lead or supporting agencies.

3.1.4 Summary

At the time of the FOCUS Rexdale pilot evaluation in 2015, key opportunities that were identified included deepening the role of the Steering Committee to address systemic issues, engaging with the leaders of partner agencies to improve engagement, recruiting additional agencies, adding resources to support the maturation of FOCUS and evolving the model to one that has a local Steering Committee and Co-Chairs.

It is interesting to note that 10 years later, that these recommendations still hold true, but now for a much larger FOCUS Toronto initiative involving seven Situation Tables. However, there is greater clarity now in terms of the cross-sectoral leadership structure that is needed to advance FOCUS Toronto, the types of agencies that are key gaps in the partnership model, and the tangible investments in time and human resources that will advance FOCUS Toronto's Impact.

3.2 Processes

This section examines processes that have been put in place to operate FOCUS Toronto, including policies and procedures, such as those dealing with AER, equity and Reconciliation and privacy.

3.2.1 Policies and Procedures

Evaluation Questions

- Are FOCUS Toronto policies, protocols and tools effective and efficient?
- Is FOCUS using an anti-racism, culturally sensitive and trauma-informed lens in all its processes?
- Are Situation Table meetings effective and efficient?

Background

FOCUS Toronto is a mature initiative and Situation Table meetings are deemed to be highly efficient based on feedback from evaluation participants. Prior to the weekly meeting, meeting participants sign the FOCUS Toronto Confidentiality Agreement. Participants are then invited to bring forward situations of acutely elevated risk in accordance with the FOCUS Toronto Information Sharing Protocol. In meetings, participants share and record information about situations in ways that are consistent with the policies and standards of their home agencies. Each situation handled by each table is assigned a number and is always referenced by that number. Through discussion, the participants determine which partner agencies should be the lead, and which will assist in a situation, based on both agency scope/mandate and capacity. Participants do not record any information about any situation unless they are assigned as a lead or assisting agency for a situation.

Strengths

Mature policies and procedures: Situation Tables across Ontario model themselves after FOCUS Toronto which they consider to be a best practice in community based, collaborative risk intervention. Many emerging Situation

“Now we are a well-oiled machine”
Interviewee (sponsor agency)

“All about fine tuning the process and trying to get faster at Situation Tables. Sometimes there are 15 situations for a meeting that we need to get through in 2 hours. In other parts of the province, they meet to discuss 1 situation for an hour.”

Interviewee (sponsor agency)

Tables use FOCUS Toronto’s policies and procedures as a template that they adapt to their context. Feedback from interviewees and focus group participants indicates that FOCUS Toronto policies and

procedures are comprehensive and that partner agencies are oriented to these during onboarding and during partner agency training. Survey findings confirm that FOCUS processes and policies are sound with **93%** of the respondents agreeing or completely agreeing with the statement, **“Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables’ processes, policies and procedures are effective in guiding the day-to-day operations of FOCUS Toronto”**.

Further, not only are its policies in place, according to survey respondents, these are also used in a consistent manner across the tables. When asked about the following statement, **“Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables’ processes, policies and procedures are used consistently”**, **96%** of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement. Finally, only **2%** of survey respondents ranked **“Enhanced definitions, policies, processes, procedures and tools”** as the most important requirement for FOCUS Toronto’s long-term sustainability.

“We have capacity to take on a lot of people because of our administrative processes”
Interviewee (sponsor agency)

Efficient meetings: As noted, FOCUS Toronto is a mature initiative. Overwhelmingly, evaluation participants agree that the weekly Situation Table meetings are well organized, proceed in a consistent manner and well facilitated. Ninety-seven percent (**97%**) of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement **“Our Focus Toronto Situation Table meetings are well run and make good use of time”**.

Opportunities

Establish guidance for direct referrals: Over the years, as relationships between the partner agencies have been strengthened, FOCUS Toronto partners, and particularly the TPS, has become more efficient in identifying which situations to refer to a FOCUS table and which would be best addressed through a referral to a community service provider. This practice of ‘direct referrals’ has helped to ensure that FOCUS Toronto’s time and resources are used appropriately. While there may not be a need for an explicit policy regarding ‘direct referrals’ made by partner agencies, it would be helpful to establish and share guidance that describes to all partners the scenarios that are best handled by a ‘direct referral’ and those which should be brought to a Situation Table.

Review AER definition and processes and determine actions regarding situations of chronically elevated risk:

Feedback from a great number of evaluation participants as well as FOCUS Toronto data, indicates that Situation Tables are increasingly called upon to support people who experience very complex issues who have been in a state of risk for a prolonged time and have not been successfully connected to supports.

“Definition of AER is problematic; we have different definitions; we designate more cases than we should; AER is more than serious; we could make interventions for effective if we could (clarify) AER.”

Focus group participant

“Some people just vote yes to everything – why do we bother.... (it) is very subjective. The voting process evens this all out... if we get too busy, we do have to try and filter out more (cases)”

Interviewee (Co-Chair)

So, while the definition of AER is clear to partner agencies, there is an opportunity to discuss the difference between situations of chronically elevated risk and situations of AER. There is value in developing context-specific examples and additional material to

support staff in better understanding what constitutes a situation of AER. Finally, there is a need to determine what to do with situations of chronic elevated risk – whether the Situation Table will address these or whether they will be referred to another table, such as SPIDER. FOCUS and SPIDER have already worked together and completed previous analyses to identify their top combined risk factors which are mental health and antisocial behaviour, housing and homelessness, and victimization and abuse. Clearly there are opportunities to further these collaborative efforts.

Strengthen cultural responsiveness through focused discussions, training and accountability: Overall, the evaluation found that FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables have implemented processes to ensure that assessments and responses to situations take issues of equity and Reconciliation into account. For example, Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Oppression training and 2SLGBTQ+ training has been provided at the annual conference and at dedicated training sessions; 95% of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement **“Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table’s practices reflect anti-racist, culturally appropriate and trauma informed principles.”**, and some evaluation participants noted that there is a greater understanding among co-chairs regarding the importance of culture.

“Cultural sensitivity – this is about intersectionality; we are not looking at this very closely; it is superficial – it’s a yes/no question only. Maybe it is because we are working virtually – too busy”

Focus group participant

At the same time, evaluation participants also indicated that there is an opportunity to strengthen the interventions provided by the tables with more intentional equity and Reconciliation capacity building. The following suggestions were made:

- More routinely and consistently discuss cultural considerations during the presentation of situations and during huddles.
- Schedule more regular trainings (i.e., providing culturally affirming service).
- Integrate a stronger accountability for equity and Reconciliation into the partnership mou and the partnership agreement.

Strengthen the role of the referral agency in interventions to improve the ability to connect with clients:

Focus group participants described that it is often difficult for a lead and or supporting agency to connect with a client, for example, when barriers such as language, lack of trust in service providers, or mental health challenges are present. It was strongly suggested that FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables strengthen the role of the referring agency in the intervention. Specifically, the referring agency should be responsible for preparing and orienting the client to FOCUS (i.e., why they have been referred, how they will be supported, and who will be contacting them) so that they are ready to consent to the FOCUS Toronto intervention and can be effectively connected to the supports that they need. Having the referring agency act as a liaison will improve communication with the client and help to reduce the number of situations that are closed prematurely.

Advance the application of privacy and information sharing policies and processes: Focus group participants repeatedly identified the challenge of adequately and consistently dealing with privacy and confidentiality, noting the complexity involved in doing so as a network of more than 150+ organizations.

“Some of the members are sharing too much information in the thread. Really important to maintain confidentiality... (I) thought our training was crystal clear...”

Focus group participant

The Partnership Agreement requires all partner agencies to abide by provincial Guidance on Information Sharing in Multi-sectoral Risk Intervention Models, applicable privacy and data protection laws, and all of FOCUS Toronto’s information sharing and privacy protocols and processes. In addition, each partner agency must have privacy and confidentiality policies that outline the safeguards and controls the organization will abide by and employ with

respect to the handling of personal information associated with cases brought forward to a FOCUS Toronto Situation Table. Further, training documents make it clear that consent for information sharing should be obtained by the referring agency from the individual prior to the sharing of information at the Situation Table. Nonetheless, focus group participants discussed many challenges with consent and information sharing, for example:

- Situations that involve families - Where it is not always clear whether consent has been obtained directly from the client or from a family member and when the family member’s consent can be treated as a proxy.
- Situations where there are languages barriers – Where it is not always clear whether the client understands what they have or have not consented to receiving/doing.
- Situations that are discussed at the table over a period of weeks – Where it is not always clear whether or for how long consent applies after the initial presentation of the situation.

It is recognized that consent is complex, particularly in the collaborative context present by FOCUS Toronto. As such regular training on FOCUS Toronto’s privacy and confidentiality policies and protocols, with “real life” case studies is recommended, not only for partner agencies, but also for Co-Chairs who are responsible for ensuring that policies are adhered to in a consistent manner.

3.2.2 Referrals

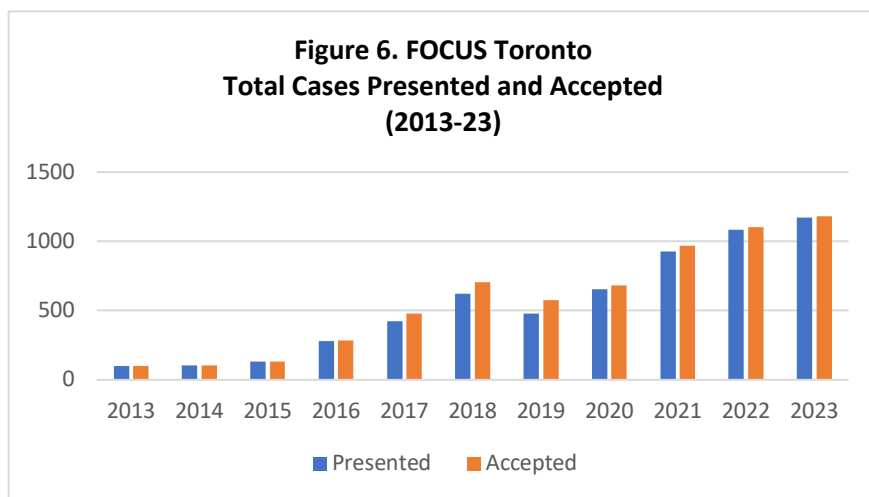
Evaluation Questions

- Are the right number of AER situations being referred to FOCUS Toronto?
- Are the situations being brought to FOCUS Toronto representative of neighborhood profiles? Are they situations of AER?

Number of Referrals

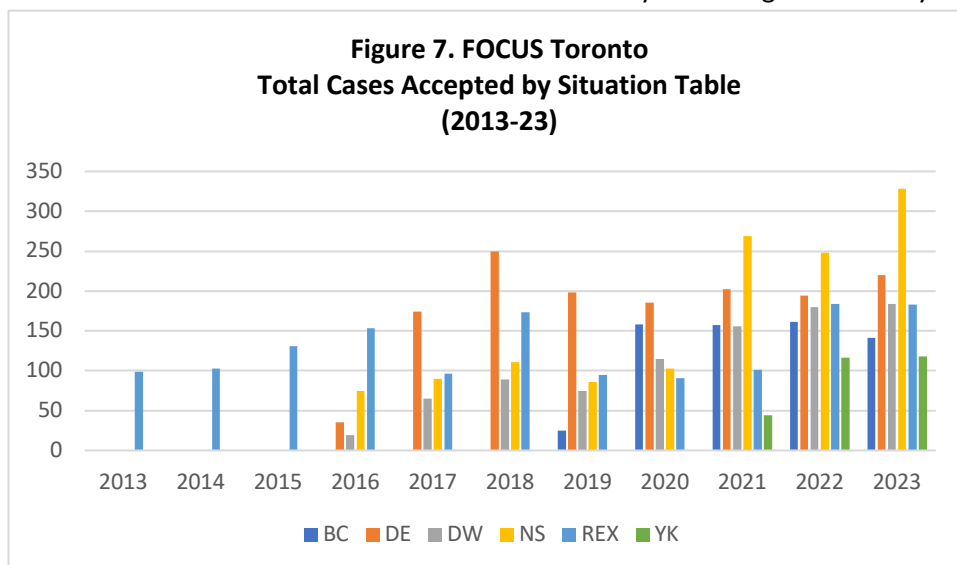
A review of FOCUS Toronto data as shown in Figure 6 shows that over the past eleven years 6,309 submissions were made to FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables

Of these 5,980 (95%) were deemed to meet AER criteria and were taken on as cases. A pattern found across all six tables is that the longer a table operates, the more cases it determines to not meet the AER threshold. One assumption is that over the 11 years of its operations, partner agencies become more comfortable challenging each other regarding the AER threshold.



On average, 543 cases were referred to FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables each year during the eleven-year period. While

comparator information is not publicly available, it is recognized that FOCUS Toronto is the busiest Situation Table in the province. Further, Annual Reports published by the Ontario’s Solicitor General shows that Ontario’s Central Region makes up the



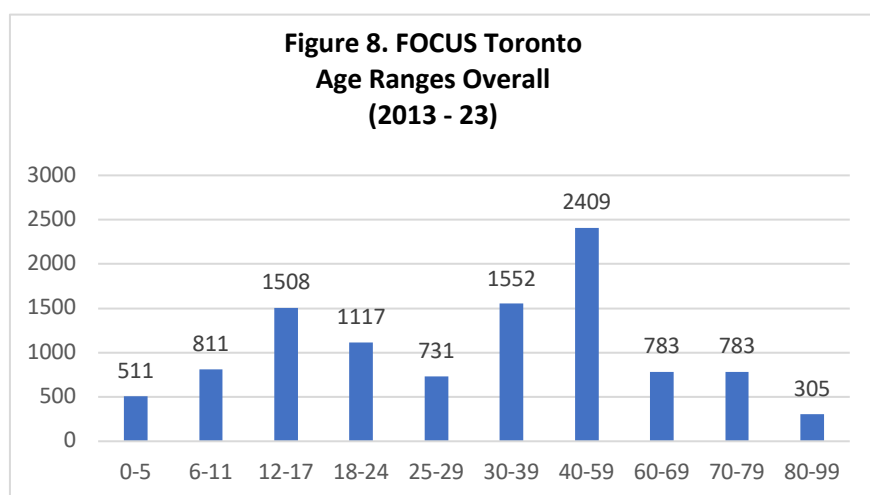
majority of submissions in Ontario¹⁰. As seen in Figure 7, between 2013 and 2016 FOCUS Rexdale referred more cases each year than any other table. Between 2017 and 2020, FOCUS Downtown East referred more cases each year than any of the other tables, and since 2021, FOCUS North Scarborough referred the most cases year over year. The total number of people supported by the FOCUS Situation Tables during the 11-year period is 10,510. Because Situation Tables address risk at the individual, family or neighbourhood level, their reach is vast.

Among the 10,510 people involved in the AER situations presented over the past eleven years, 4,315 individual persons (43%) and 6,117 individuals in families (61%). In addition, in 56 instances the situation involved a dwelling (0.5%) and in 13 (0.1%) instances the AER situation involved a neighbourhood.

The following socio-demographic data is available to describe the population served by FOCUS:

- Females comprised 53% of the situations for which gender was recorded; males accounted for 46% and 1% of clients identified as trans.

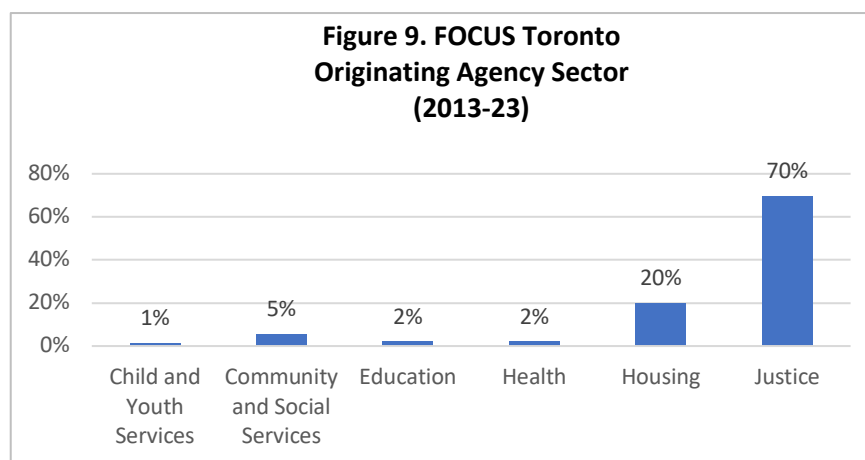
- Figure 8 shows that the largest age group served by FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables is adults aged 40 - 59 years (23%), followed by adults aged 30-39 (15%) and youth aged 12 – 17 years (14%). It should be noted that the number of people aged 29 years or less, which in total comprised 45% of the individuals



supported, decreased during the 11-year period, while the number of older adults has held steady.

As seen in Figure 9, the justice sector makes the most referrals to FOCUS Toronto's Situation Tables, in total referring 70% of all cases to the Situation Tables and the TPS is the main referring agency within the sector by far. Again, Situation Table data is not publicly available, however the high percentage of referrals made by justice/police in Toronto is consistent with other Situation Tables known to the evaluators.

The top ten referring agencies are:



¹⁰ For more information see: <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/risk-driven-tracking-database>

1. TPS, 51 Division (1,065 referrals)
2. TPS, 23 Division (689 referrals)
3. Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) Tenant Access and Support Services (668 referrals; 15%)
4. TPS, 14 Division (535 referrals)
5. TPS, 42 Division (370 referrals)
6. TPS, 43 Division (366 referrals)
7. TESS (340 referrals)
8. TPS, 41 Division (249 referrals)
9. TPS, 31 Division (241 referrals)
10. TCHC, Community Safety Unit (197 referrals)

Risk Categories and Factors

According to FOCUS Toronto Year Overview reports, the top three risk categories for FOCUS Toronto over the past eleven years have consistently been mental health, anti-social behaviour and housing as depicted in Figure 10.

Historically, suicide, criminal involvement, and basic needs have also appeared as one of the top three risk categories, but not as consistently. However, by far, the largest risk category year over year is mental health, accounting for 49% of all risk categories in 2013 and 80% in 2023.

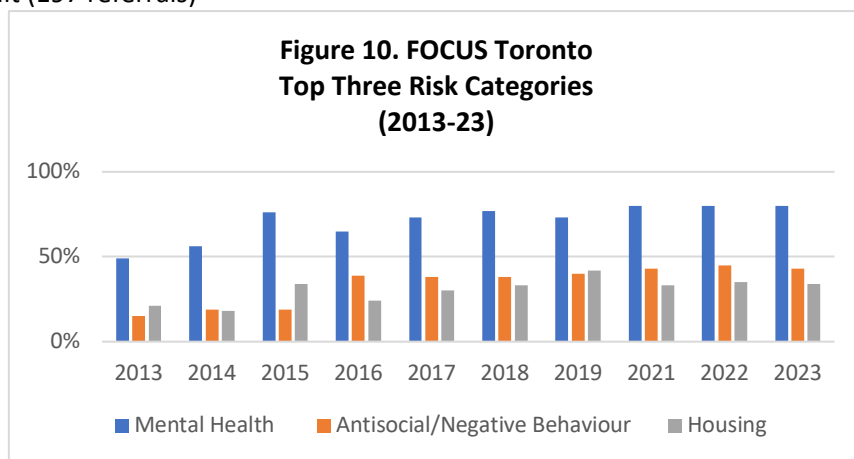
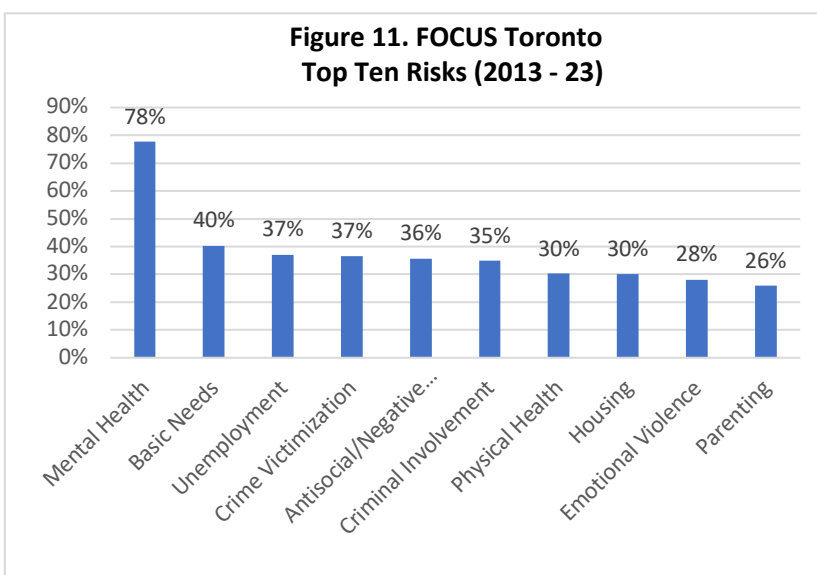


Figure 11 shows that in cumulatively, the top risks over a 10-year period from 2013-23 are mental health, basic needs, and unemployment.

“Helps the most vulnerable i.e., addictions, homelessness, gangs, violence, exploitation, trafficking, criminal victimization, mental health support and saves lives.”

Partner Agency Survey
Respondent



Strengths

An increasing and sizable number of situations are being brought forward: The data indicates that on average, about 200 situations were being supported by a table in 2023. However, evaluation participants suggest that there are likely more situations of AER that could be brought to weekly Situation Tables. At the same time, strong feedback was received that the partner agencies are experiencing significant capacity issues which is increasingly impacting their ability to actively participate in the Situation Tables. Interview and focus group feedback suggests that the number of situations referred to FOCUS Toronto is dependent on the capacity available at partner agencies, and if there were more capacity, perhaps more situations would be brought forward. Overall, additional inquiry is needed to determine the influences on referral numbers (i.e., year over year increases in TPS data indicators, creation of new programs, agency capacity, TPS division capacity, direct referral increases from TPS division representatives, etc.).

As part of the Partner Agreement agencies are required to develop and implement internal processes for bringing forward situations: FOCUS Toronto success depends on partner agencies assuming collective responsibility for the initiative and not leaving the work to their agency representative. The Partnership Agreement spells out this requirement, for example through the following partner agency role statement, *“Establishes an internal communication plan and practices that allow any acutely elevated risk observations made by any of their frontline professionals, in the course of normal business practice, to come to the attention of their FOCUS Toronto representative”*. Survey findings suggests that the collective accountability for developing and implementing the referral process and achieving agreed upon targets is being translated in practice with **90%** of respondents indicating that they agree or completely agree with the statement, ***“My organization is able to identify, screen and bring forward AER situations to the Situation Table”***.

Opportunities

Strengthen coordination with SPIDER: The service system has evolved since the first FOCUS Situation Table began operating in 2013. While FOCUS Toronto’s mandate is limited to situations of AER, SPIDER was initiated to identify and case manage situations that are more chronic and complex in nature. FOCUS Toronto data and feedback from evaluation participants indicates that FOCUS is increasingly trying to provide interventions for cases that are in fact experiencing chronic and complex risk. Partner agencies are increasingly concerned about these clients because the FOCUS Toronto interventions are seen as not being ineffective. Evaluation participants suggested that SPIDER and FOCUS Toronto enhance the assessment and coordination processes of the two tables.

“Maybe we need to do a better job doing case studies with SPIDER and FOCUS. The Co-Chairs have to triage cases better to make sure they get to the right table”.

Interviewee

Identify the priority populations that FOCUS Toronto can best serve: FOCUS Toronto is a singular intervention for addressing AER, but it is not the only solution. While FOCUS Toronto is responsive to situations that are brought forward, there is an opportunity for FOCUS to review its data, identify which situations (or populations) it is best at supporting and where it is not an ideal solution. This will enable it to define and focus on what it does best and develop strategies to support other situations (and populations). As a priority, there is an opportunity for FOCUS to review return cases.

Additionally, the data indicates that return cases are comprised of people with highly complex needs who are already attached to many services/service providers. Focus group feedback indicates that these cases require ongoing case management and wrap around services, suggesting that FOCUS Toronto may not be the right table for these situations. At the same time, FOCUS can support most of its cases with interventions. Better defining the priority populations will help to strengthen engagement and morale among partner agencies, who express significant concern about lack of success in supporting return and complex situations. Baselines and targets could then be established for reaching and achieving a defined level of impact with the priority populations, and in specific neighborhoods served by FOCUS and/or its Situation Tables.

3.2.3 Interventions

Evaluation Question

- Are interventions timely? Are interventions coordinated?

Background

Agencies assigned to a situation are expected to make contact with their clients within 48 hours of the meeting. At the outset of FOCUS Toronto, it was envisioned that interventions would consist of joint home visits or joint “door knocks”, however the pandemic greatly reduced the frequency of in person and collaborative interventions.

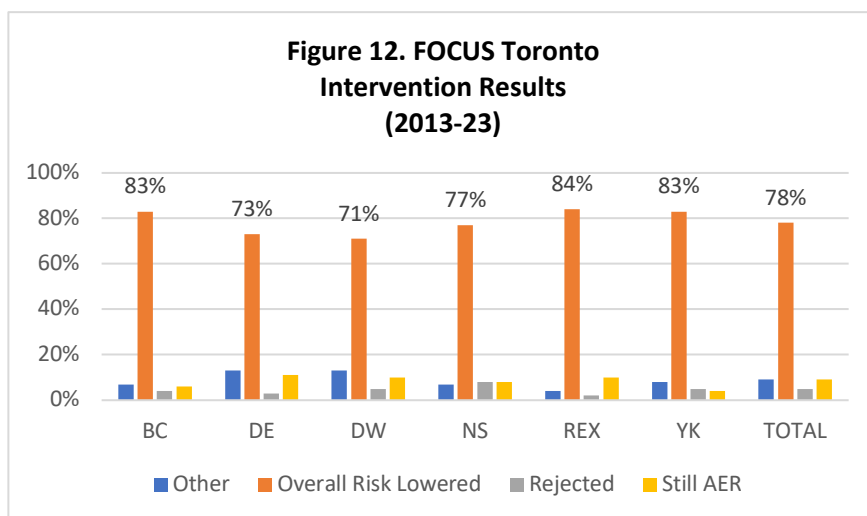
The FOCUS Toronto Coordinator sends an email to the meeting participants after each weekly meeting that lists the situations addressed and lead and assisting agencies identified. The Co-Chairs follow up with the lead agency after 48 hours to determine whether the situation has been addressed as per the protocol. Situations are closed for several reasons including death and incarceration and most often in three instances: 1) the individual or family concerned is connected with and accepts service; 2) the individual or family is connected with and refuses service; or 3) the individual or family cannot be reached.

“(FOCUS is) very beneficial to connect clients quickly and working together – everyone has the same passion coming to the table; we all have a common goal to stabilize their life or get them back on track”

Focus group participant

Strengths

Risk is lowered: Risk was lowered through a connection to service for 78% of the cases that were supported by Situation Table interventions, while 9% of cases were closed but still considered to be situations of acutely elevated risk. In addition, for 4% of cases the intervention proposed by the Situation Table was rejected and for 9% of the cases the situation was concluded for other reasons. FOCUS Rexdale experienced the highest percentage of situations closed with risk reduced – 84%, while Downtown West experienced the lowest percentage of situations closed with risk reduced - 71% (Figure 12).



In addition to this data, partner agencies believe that their interventions are reducing risk. Of note, **93%** of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, **“My FOCUS Toronto Situation Table interventions reduce risk for clients”**, and **93%** of survey respondents also indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, **“Our FOCUS Toronto interventions connect clients to the resources and services or supports that they need”**.

Meetings are organized. The co-chairs are organized. They run them well. Everyone has a purpose and a direction. People feel it is a valuable use of their time. People show up.”

Interviewee (Co-Chair)

Efficient mobilization of services: Again, FOCUS Toronto is a mature initiative and has established highly efficient systems to mobilize the resources of partner agencies. The evaluators consistently heard that weekly Situation Table meetings are generally well facilitated by the Co-Chairs - they begin on time, follow the script, and are run efficiently. Partner agencies agree quickly on whether a situation is AER and typically lead and supporting agencies are quickly identified.

“We had an officer visit from Australia. He sat in on a meeting. We dealt with 8 AER situations. We 30 agencies involved in those 8. He was blown away with how this happens so quickly and efficiently. Every meeting is the same, it doesn’t matter which table. We do 6 meetings a week. It is the process...”

Coordination of services: FOCUS was designed to maximize local resources by bringing service providers together to one table to develop coordinated responses to AER situations. According to evaluation participants, the partner agencies are working together and coordinating collaborative responses to the situations brought to weekly meetings. Ninety-one percent (**91%**) of survey respondents indicated that they agree or strongly

“It is reducing calls for service... reducing risk. There are less calls to 911. People are getting connected to the supports they need.”

Interviewee

agree with the statement, *“Our Situation Table interventions are well coordinated by the lead and supporting agencies”*.

Opportunities

Be more purposeful in identifying lead and assisting agencies: Most FOCUS Toronto partner agencies have participated as the lead agency in an intervention, with 136 different organizations assuming the lead agency role between 2013 and 2023, not including City of Toronto divisions/department and the TPS. However, a further review of the data indicates that a small number of partner agencies consistently assume the lead agency role in interventions.

Table 3 below shows that the top five agencies are providing the lead agency role in as few as 33% of situations (at the North Scarborough table) and as many as 54% of situations (at the Downtown West table), as seen in the table below.

Table 3. % of Situations with the same 5 Agencies in the Lead Agency Role (2013- 23)

Downtown East	Rexdale	North Scarborough	Downtown West	York	Black Creek
47%	53%	33%	54%	42%	36%

Table 4 below lists the top five lead agencies (# and % situations led) for each table.

Table 4. Top 5 Lead Agencies for each Situation Table and % Situations Led (2013-24)

Downtown East	Gerstein Crisis Centre	248 (15%)
	Sound Times	176 (11%)
	Toronto Community Housing Corporation - Tenant Access and Support Services	142 (9%)
	Crisis Outreach Service for Seniors	131 (8%)
	Toronto Police Service - 51 Division	70 (4%)
Rexdale	Toronto Community Housing Corporation - Tenant Access and Support Services	240 (15%)
	Reconnect Community Health Services	211 (14%)
	Rexdale Community Health Centre	148 (10%)
	Toronto Police Service - 23 Division	81 (5%)
	Canadian Mental Health Association Peel Dufferin	81 (5%)
North Scarborough	The Housing Help Centre	145 (9%)
	Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities	143 (9%)
	Toronto Paramedic Services	101 (6%)
	Toronto District School Board	86 (5%)
	Toronto Police Service - 43 Division	83 (5%)
Downtown West	Gerstein Crisis Centre	182 (18%)
	City of Toronto - Streets to Homes	135 (13%)

	Reconnect Community Health Services	91 (9%)
	Toronto Police Service - 14 Division	73 (7%)
	Toronto Paramedic Services	66 (6%)
York	Toronto Community Housing Corporation - Tenant Access and Support Services	40 (10%)
	Unison Health and Community Services	38 (9%)
	The Housing Help Centre	36 (9%)
	City of Toronto - Toronto Employment and Social Services - Lawrence Square	26 (6%)
	For Youth Initiative	25 (6%)
Black Creek	Across Boundaries	63 (8%)
	Toronto Community Housing Corporation - Community Safety Unit	49 (6%)
	Canadian Mental Health Association - Toronto	46 (6%)
	Toronto Police Service - 31 Division	43 (6%)
	Housing Help Centre	40 (5%)

On average, each of the 6,542 interventions carried out by FOCUS Toronto between 2013-23 involved 3.8 supporting agencies. Once again, while most of the partner organizations were involved as supporting agencies between 2013 and 2023, a small number of partner agencies consistently assumed this role.

“In many situations it is often the same agencies; is this bad?”

Interviewee

Within City of Toronto, TESS is most often involved as a supporting agency and has been involved in 2,057 cases and the TPS in 1,341 cases. Not including TPS and City of Toronto divisions/departments, the top 15 supporting agencies, involved in 43% of cases, were:

1. Toronto Community Housing Corporation (1,453)
2. Ontario Disability Support Program (1,393 cases)
3. Gerstein Crisis Centre (829 cases)
4. Toronto District School Board (778 cases)
5. Gerstein Crisis Centre (777 cases)
6. Home and Community Care (750 cases)
7. The Housing Help Centre (745 cases)
8. Toronto Paramedic Services (702 cases)
9. Fred Victor Centre (695 cases)
10. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (653 cases)
11. Reconnect Community Health (569 cases)
12. Children’s Aid Society (494 cases)
13. Sound Times (448)
14. Surrey Place (346 cases)
15. Canadian Mental Health Association (282 cases)

“Door knocks is a success. Direct contact and connection. It is personal contact. This is what sets it apart”.

“Good co-operation once joint visits are made in person. But little by in from agencies; only a few agencies are doing in person visits. Some agencies are very quick to connect to the client and others do not respond to the thread at all”.

Focus group participants

The small number of organizations engaged as lead and supporting agencies reflects the nature of risk that predominates at the Situation Tables. With most cases involving risk related to mental health, followed by housing and anti-social behaviour, it is not surprising that the leading and supporting agencies are predominantly mental health agencies followed by TPS divisions and housing organizations.

“We always need to look at the kinds of supports that the demographic needs. Need to look at the agencies in our community and see if they match the needs we are seeing. Right now, we are using a generic approach – all the agencies should be at the table and all can help.... we can do better about being more intentional in our approach”.

Interviewee

show up”

are needed. <This is> confusing for the client. This of the year. some cases could be dealt with fewer

it be a lot of follow up. <It> takes a long time for people knocking on the door... client gets frustrated

ervention because sometime 2 of 10 agencies do not

“The other overwhelming piece is the # of services and supports that get offered to a family. Too many agencies at the table and too many services and supports; need to prioritize”.

Focus group participants

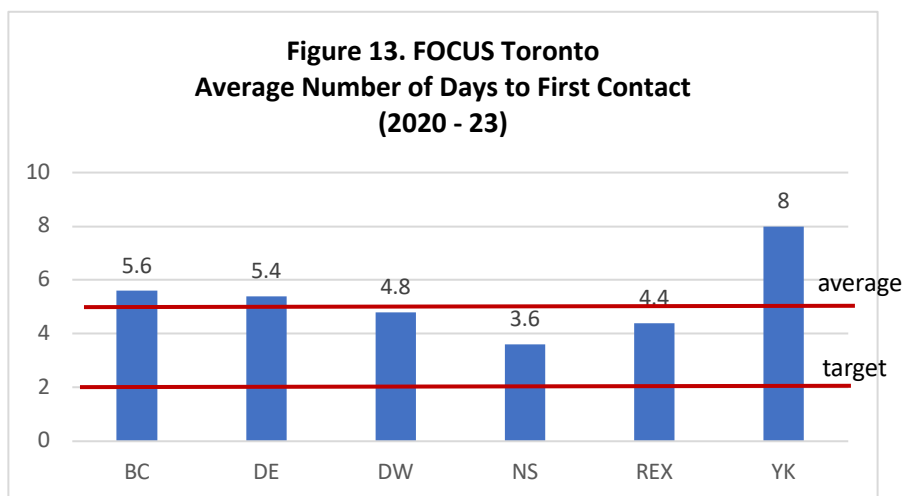
Be more intentional with the intervention team size and composition for complex cases given partner

agency capacity challenges: FOCUS Toronto partner agencies are highly committed to the initiative and there are instances when many organizations will volunteer to support a case. However, there was significant feedback from focus group participants and interviewees about the need to be more thoughtful about lead and assisting agencies identified to support each case given the limited capacity of agencies. Namely, there were recommendations to reduce the size of the team, have the lead agency focus on the most pressing issue and bring in assisting agencies over time and as needed to provide connections to address secondary risk factors.

There is strong agreement among evaluation participants that FOCUS Toronto interventions are leveraging community resources and effectively coordinating services and supports to reduce or prevent risk. Nonetheless, given the pressures on the service system and the capacity issues experienced by partner agencies, there is an opportunity to streamline the delivery of FOCUS interventions. Focus group participants suggested that fewer organizations could be involved in an intervention. This could help to not overwhelm a client while reducing the burden on partner agencies.

Improve time to first contact: As has been noted in this report, FOCUS Toronto has very few outcome measures and metrics by which it can monitor and assess its performance. One exception is the aim to connect with clients with 48 hours or 2 days after a Situation Table meeting. FOCUS Toronto has only been

collecting time to first contact information consistently since 2020. Over this five-year period, the average number of days to first contact, across all tables, is 5.3 days, well above the target. As shown in Figure 13, none of the tables have reached the target, however, North Scarborough, Rexdale and Downtown West are below average, while Downtown East and Black



Creek are just above average, and York is well above average.

The goal is to carry out as many attempts as possible to make contact with the person or family. According to focus group participants and interviewees, there are many factors that create barriers to connection, some of which have been described in this report already. We heard from evaluation participants that lead/assisting agencies cannot make contact when clients do not understand why they are being contacted or when they have not consented to being contacted, and further that language barriers and lack of trust in service systems are additional barriers. In addition, partner agencies report that, due to capacity issues within their organizations, it can be challenging to meet the 48-hour target. They also reported that some situations are not followed up on in a timely manner by the lead/assisting agencies, and that co-chairs could be more assertive in reaching out to the lead agency to ensure that there are timely connections with clients. Finally, as was highlighted earlier in the report, there is not regular attendance of partner agencies at the weekly meetings. Responsibility for meeting the 48-hour target falls to a small number of partners who consistently sign on as either the lead or assisting agency.

Evaluation participants suggested that the originating agency can help to better bridge the connection to a client by reaching out to the client after the huddle to officially facilitate the connection to the lead and assisting agencies (i.e., advise the client about the staff and organizations that will be connecting with them). In addition, evaluation participants suggested that the Co-Chairs implement a formal “follow-up” process to ensure that clients are receiving and following through on connections in a timely manner, and to brainstorm around situations where waitlists or lack of community resources are preventing a timely intervention. FOCUS Toronto could also examine the median number of days to first contact and remove any outliers to determine whether the average number of days to first contact is affected.

Provide translation/interpretation: Clients who experience barriers due to their lack of English language fluency may not respond to a first contact or the assisting agencies for many of the reasons described above. Additionally, they may not follow through on a connection if they do not understand how the

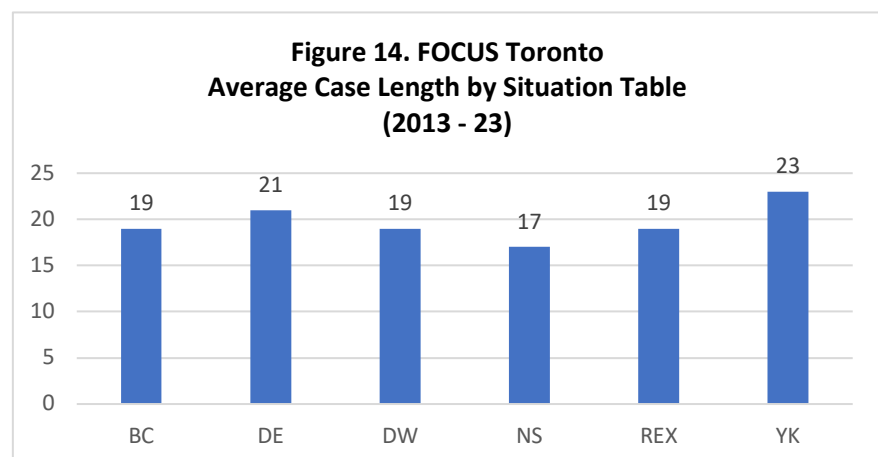
connection is relevant to their needs or if they cannot communicate well with the service provider. Partner agencies suggested that interpretation/translation resources be secured for the FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables. However, as partner organizations may already have resources to provide interpretation/translation for their clients, there is an opportunity for the FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables to clarify the responsibility for interpretation/translation as part of the MOU.

Develop a standard for case length that aligns with the FOCUS Toronto mandate, populations served and agency capacity: A standard/target has not been set by FOCUS Toronto for case length making it difficult to assess the appropriateness of current case lengths. As seen in Table 5, cases have typically been open between 16 days (in 2015) and 22 days (in 2013) and the average situation length across the six tables is 19.6 days. The data also indicate that the case length for all FOCUS Toronto situations has not fluctuated significantly over the past eleven years. Further, the average number of days that a situation remains open does not vary as considerably from table to table in comparison to the average time to first contact. All but the Downtown East and York tables are below the average of 19.6 days.

Agency feedback collected for this evaluation indicates that FOCUS Toronto interventions are being provided in a timely manner with **91%** of survey respondents indicating that they agree or completely agree with the statement, ***“Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table interventions are typically provided in a timely manner”***. However, the Thompson and Leroux (2020)¹¹ report noted that *“the mandate of FOCUS is bleeding; when cases are carried over for weeks, FOCUS is no longer an intervention mechanism, it’s just case management”*. In the absence of a clear standard for case length, FOCUS can engage partners in a quality improvement exercise aimed at establishing a case length standard and target for FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables.

Table 5. Average Case Length

Year	Days
2013	22
2014	20
2015	16
2016	21
2017	18
2018	20
2019	18
2020	17
2021	20
2022	20
2023	21
Avg.	19.6



¹¹ Sara K. Thompson & Elisabeth Leroux. (2020). *Final Report - Design and Performance: Developing Canadian Partnerships for Countering Violent Extremism. Prepared for the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence, Public Safety Canada. 204 pages.*

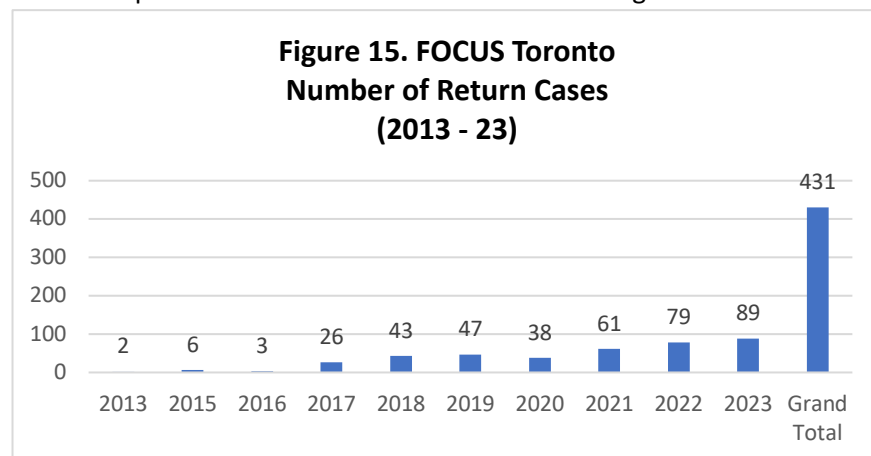
Strengthen follow up processes for people who cannot be reached or who refused consent: Many partner agencies expressed concern about individuals whose cases are closed (9% of situations) because they could not be reached or who refused to consent to a FOCUS Toronto intervention. Others expressed concern about the client whose case is closed following a connection to service when it is known that the client is a heavy service user with complex needs. It was recommended that a follow-up process be put in place to ensure that clients do not fall through the cracks and that appropriate referrals can be made should FOCUS Toronto referrals not address the AER situation.

“Who is responsible for follow up? If I did a door know and no answer then we close it then what – do I follow up on my own?”

“We do not have a way of knowing what happens in follow up. Should implement questions – who is following this client now that it is closed.”

Focus group participant

Strengthen processes for responding to chronic and complex risk situations: As seen Figure 15 and Table 6 below, there were a total of 431 return cases or about 7% of the total cases accepted by FOCUS. Year over year, more AER situations are returning to the Situation Tables. In 2013, two situations returned to the FOCUS Rexdale table and by 2023, 89 situations had returned to the six tables, an average of 15 situations per table. The tables that have seen the highest number of return situations are the Downtown



East, with an average of 10.7 return situations per year, and North Scarborough with an average of 9.4 return situations per year. The York Situation Table has seen the lowest number of return situations, with an average of 5.6 per year. Overall, most cases that return to the tables present with the same risks.

Table 6. Number of Return Situations per Year and by Table

		2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	Grand Total
BC	Yes - Different Risk						1	4	4	3	2	14/30%	47/12%
	Yes - Same Risk						1	10	10	6	6	33/70%	
DE	Yes - Different Risk				2	2	4	4	5	4	3	24/25%	97/25%
	Yes - Same Risk			2	9	14	14	4	9	9	12	73/75%	
DW	Yes - Different Risk				1		2	1	5	8	8	25/34%	74/19%
	Yes - Same Risk				3	4	4	6	3	13	16	49/66%	
NS	Yes - Different Risk				3	3	1	1	4	3	6	21/25%	85/22%
	Yes - Same Risk			1	1	9	10	3	12	12	16	64/75%	
REX	Yes - Different Risk	2	2		2	5	8	2	4	4	3	32/43%	74/19%

		2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	Grand Total
	Yes - Same Risk		4		5	6	2	3	5	7	10	42/67%	
	Yes - Different Risk									1	2	3/18%	
YK	Yes - Same Risk									9	5	14/82%	17/3%
	Grand Total	2	6	3	26	43	47	38	61	79	89	394	

When return cases are further analyzed to determine the nature of risk, the two most prevalent risk categories year over year between 2019-23 were mental health and anti-social behaviour. FOCUS Toronto data from 2022-23 indicates that top risks for return situations that were still AER after being closed were housing/homelessness crisis and mental health. The data also indicates that the average time for a case to return with the same top risk to FOCUS Toronto is 222 days or 7.5 months, a median of 154 days, and a range of 22 days to 1,323 days or 3.6 years. Twenty-five percent (25%) return within 3 months, 15% between 3-6 months, 43% within 6-12 months, and 16% return a year or more later.

“FOCUS is not a one and done; come as many times as you need”

Interviewee

Partner agencies noted that many FOCUS Toronto clients, particularly those with more complex needs, require ongoing case management and long-term service. However, these services are not readily available from partner agencies (i.e., there are wait lists for service), reducing the capacity of the FOCUS to effectively mitigate risk for all the situations accepted as AER. The study of the FOCUS Toronto initiative conducted by Thompson and Leroux (2020)⁹ provides some insight into the tension at play regarding situations of risk that are acute and those that are chronic in nature.

“The overarching priority of FOCUS Toronto from a policing perspective is to reduce the number of calls of service required by high-needs individuals. That being said, there is a meaningful distinction between high-needs individuals who can reasonably be served by the FOCUS Toronto program, and what are colloquially referred to as “frequent flyers” – i.e., those who require intensive support beyond what is feasible for FOCUS Toronto to facilitate.”

A recurring theme that emerged from this evaluation is the need to engage partners in a discussion regarding acute and chronic risk situations and how these are or should be handled by FOCUS. Focus group participants indicated that situations of AER as well as situations of persistent, complex and chronic risk are supported by FOCUS. Many questioned the extent to which FOCUS Toronto is mandated to or has the

“It’s not a one size fits all, we need to tier it.”

Interviewee

capacity to effectively reduce risk for those experiencing chronic and complex risk, noting that connection to service is typically not an effective or feasible intervention for this population. As previously described in this report, some

evaluation participants recommended that FOCUS Toronto clarify its scope by recommitting to its core mandate of addressing AER situations and work more effectively with SPIDER and other service system tables to support situations that involve complex and chronic risk. In discussions with FOCUS Toronto’s leadership team, there is recognition that risk situations are complex, and there is an opportunity to better delineate which situations FOCUS is best situated to support and how to better coordinate referrals and work collaboratively with SPIDER.

3.2.3 Continuous Quality Improvement

Evaluation Question

- Has FOCUS Toronto measured its performance, continuously improved and reported on its work?

Background

Since the first Situation Table was launched as a pilot in 2013, FOCUS Toronto has implemented continuous improvement and development activities. For example, evaluation and research projects regarding FOCUS Toronto were conducted in 2013, 2015 and 2018 and 2020. The Steering Committee meets quarterly to review FOCUS Toronto data and reports prepared by the Coordination Team regarding key trends or systemic issues. The Coordination Team also meets consistently to identify quality improvement opportunities and has developed some work plans guiding the planning and implementation of expansion efforts including the addition of a seventh table. Co-Chairs participate in regular training and an annual conference provide opportunities to collectively work on quality improvement priorities.

Strengths

Thoughtful data informed expansion: FOCUS Toronto has spent more than 10 years scaling the initiative across the city and with the advent of the seventh table in the fall of 2024, is considered by the sponsor agencies to be city-wide in scope. The leadership of FOCUS Toronto chose to scale up gradually, cognizant of capacity considerations among the sponsors and the community agency partners. It also drew upon neighbourhood and TPS data such as reductions in calls and direct referrals to inform the approach taken to introducing new Situation Tables.

Continued attention to improving FOCUS Toronto: The evaluators found that FOCUS Toronto has integrated activities that drive continuous improvement at the operational level. FOCUS monitors its client data and partner attendance on an ongoing basis, collects feedback on all its trainings and events, and conducts a quarterly health check. It holds annual debriefs with Situation Tables to present data and feedback, and the Coordination Team carries out an annual planning meeting during which it identifies actions to implement in the coming year that build on strengths and address issues identified over the course of the year. At the systems level, issues are being identified and escalated to the Steering Committee. While there is not a formal mechanism in place for addressing inter-governmental issues, systemic issues have historically been raised at the Ontario Working Group Collaborative on Risk-Driven Community Safety.

Opportunities

It should be noted that the opportunities described below are recommendations that have appeared in previous evaluations of FOCUS Toronto, including the FOCUS Rexdale Pilot Project Evaluation conducted by Vision & Results in 2015. FOCUS Toronto is concerned with and strives to practice continuous quality improvement. Nonetheless, there are important steps that can be taken to make significant progress in this area.

Develop and use continuous quality improvement approach and strengthened accountability agreements for partner agencies. Previous evaluations have recommended that FOCUS Toronto develop and apply a more regular and rigorous approach to quality improvement beyond point-in-time evaluations. In doing so, FOCUS would continuously look for ways to improve the quality of its processes, services or outcomes and use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle to help to ensure that priority improvements are not only identified but also implemented.

There is an opportunity for the sponsoring agencies and the Steering Committee to review their commitment to continuous quality improvement, dedicate time and resources, including financial resources, to develop and operationalize a continuous improvement approach and build mutual accountability for performance expectations into the Partnership MOU.

Establish a performance management framework based on an updated Theory of Change, Logic Model and set of process and outcomes measures and targets:

Since its inception, the FOCUS Toronto Theory of Change and Logic Model is that cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration improves community wellbeing. Further, based on survey and focus group feedback, evaluation participants believe that FOCUS Toronto is contributing to community safety and wellbeing. Nonetheless, outcome indicators and measures that make the connection between FOCUS Toronto activities and the CSWB Plan have not been established and are not routinely monitoring or measured. Further, the effectiveness of FOCUS Toronto is gauged by how many referrals are made and how many situations are closed. Additional metrics are needed including the appropriateness, quality, and ongoing satisfaction/experience with the services provided, as well as the impact of the services provided.

“FOCUS involved the adoption of an existing model applied in a different context. Need to be continuously learning. Other interventions have been created. What is the value of FOCUS in 2024. Evidence suggests it plays a significant role, but maybe it is different that it was.”

Interviewee (sponsor agency)

Establishing a robust framework for ongoing performance monitoring and measurement, and regular periodic external evaluations would assist FOCUS Toronto with better assessing its efficacy.

Develop a client feedback and complaints processes: FOCUS Toronto has yet to implement a routine practice for collecting satisfaction and outcome information directly from clients. This and other evaluations have found it challenging to secure the engagement of individuals, however, as will be illustrated in Section 3.3 of this report, the direct voices of individuals and their stories can be extremely useful for illustrating the impact of FOCUS Toronto on the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. In addition, client insights can help FOCUS to develop relevant and client-centered service improvement strategies, for example, to reduce the number of people who refuse to consent to services or increase the timeliness of connection with ‘hard to reach’ individuals.

Resources will be required to establish a standardized method for gathering information about satisfaction/experience with and outcomes of FOCUS Toronto interventions. For example, FOCUS may engage an objective third-party to carry out a follow-up interviews with clients after their case is closed at the Situation Table (e.g., at the three- or six-month point) using a standardized interview tool. To address issues of privacy, consent regarding this follow up interview could be obtained from the client at the time that they are referred to the FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables or by the lead agency.

Similarly, FOCUS does not have a complaints process that is readily available to individuals who may wish to come forward with a question, concern or complaint. By providing guidance in this area, FOCUS can help to ensure accountability and improve service delivery by providing a mechanism for individuals to voice and seek resolution to their concerns.

Conduct applied research: FOCUS Toronto has a rich database of client information. It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to undertake multi-variate analyses to identify relationships and patterns in the data, for example, the correlation between client demographics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, age), risk factors, service needs, table processes and changes in outcomes for specific populations over time. However, FOCUS leads have previously collaborated with academic researchers, for example, with Thompson and Leroux on the (2020)⁹ study, which correlated the number of police contacts pre and post referral to Situation Tables. Continuing to carry out applied research can help to enhance FOCUS' understanding of their data and identify practical improvements and solutions. Focused research can be used to assist with engaging not only FOCUS partners, but also system leaders, to develop a shared understanding of particularly complex situations or challenges and identify more targeted and effective solutions or interventions. As a first step, FOCUS can draw on the findings or recommendations in this report to identify questions that require additional inquiry.

3.2.4 Summary

In assessing FOCUS Toronto processes since the pilot evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale in 2015, most of the Situation Table processes generally continue to function well across all of the Situation Tables. Many new agencies that have joined FOCUS as the initiative has expanded, and for many agencies substitute representatives frequently attend meetings. Therefore, FOCUS Toronto provides regular orientation and training, draws upon TPS data to demonstrate the impact of partner interventions, and has augmented the original Partner Agency Agreement to further increase commitment.

Year over year, the data demonstrates that that FOCUS Toronto is accepting and supporting more situations, with close to 1,200 cases accepted in 2024 and approximately 200 cases supported per table. The database and associated technology have been augmented over time, and more information/data about situations is available, including the number of situations accepted and declined, the services that individuals, families and places were connected to, case length and number of reopened situations. In addition, some information on direct referrals and reduction in calls to TPS is also available.

Nonetheless, there are opportunities to further refine and strengthen key areas:

- Clearly define the types of cases and priority populations that would be best addressed by FOCUS Toronto versus other initiatives/tables in the City of Toronto.
- Work with partner agencies to further strengthen their engagement and commitment.
- Enhance everyone's understanding of the specifics regarding AER and privacy and confidentiality;
- Set performance standards and/or metrics for key indicators such as time to first contact and follow-up.
- Update the FOCUS Toronto Theory of Change and Logic Model and introduce a performance measurement framework.

Overall, FOCUS operations are stable and strong. As such FOCUS Toronto can shift its focus to establishing and pursuing a new ten-year vision with defined impact indicators.

3.3 Outcomes

In this section, findings are presented regarding the impact, particularly medium-or long term in nature, of FOCUS Toronto on partner agencies, individuals and their family members, and communities.

3.3.1 Impact on Partner Agencies

Evaluation Questions

- Has collaboration amongst all partner agencies been built and strengthened over time?
- Is there increased and improved service coordination?

Background

This is an impact evaluation of an initiative that has been operational for more than ten years. As noted in previous sections of this report, FOCUS Toronto has not yet established specific performance measures and targets, particularly for FOCUS Toronto service recipients but also partner agencies and communities. As such, there is limited data, beyond the information in the database regarding FOCUS Toronto's impact. Nonetheless, qualitative data gathered during this evaluation provides insight into outcomes and sets a baseline for the development of future targets as part of FOCUS Toronto's performance framework.

Strengths

Partner agency satisfaction: Findings from the interviews, focus groups and surveys indicate that partner agencies are satisfied with FOCUS Toronto. In fact, **98%** of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement: ***"My agency will continue to participate in the FOCUS Toronto initiative"***.

"It's been a great opportunity to learn about and build connections to resources"

Focus group participant

Partner agency collaboration: Evaluation participants agree that FOCUS Toronto has strengthened collaboration among the partner organizations. Over the past decade FOCUS has had significant success in bringing together organizations that had not previously been familiar with each other or worked together to identify and address AER situations. For example, **90%** of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, ***"Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table partner agencies have built and are sustaining collaborative and ongoing partnerships"***.

Collaboration outside of weekly Situation Table meetings and direct referrals: Partner agencies are in contact with each other outside of the weekly Situation Table meetings. They communicate with each other to mobilize and coordinate their resources and support clients and community members who are not associated with the Situation Tables. For example, the TPS has established a direct referral process to connect FOCUS Toronto agencies to community members who may not meet AER criteria. FOCUS Toronto's positive impact on broader service delivery system coordination and the direct referral process should be acknowledged and leveraged by all the tables.

Opportunities

Examine and address agency involvement and capacity challenges at each Situation Table: When asked to rank the most important requirements for the sustainability of FOCUS Toronto, the top two requirements (out of seven options) identified by survey respondents were:

- Stronger engagement of partner agencies (5.17)
- Dedicated funding for FOCUS Toronto staff so that lead agencies and partners do not have to resource all the activities in kind (4.95)¹²

As noted earlier in the report, FOCUS Toronto data shows that, a small number FOCUS Toronto's partner agencies attend Situation Table meetings on a regular basis and consistently volunteer as lead or assisting agencies. Focus group participants agreed that partner agencies are not equally involved, that their inability to send back-ups to meetings impacts communication and continuity of supports, and that agencies are challenged to connect with clients as agreed upon in threads.

"The problem is the commitment and coordination required of large organizations. We have a big team internally to coordinate. We need to stay on top of all the emails".

Focus group participant

It is unclear whether this is an intended or unintended consequence, that the agencies that are most willing to volunteer are meant to lead most of the situations. Continuing to rely on a small number of agencies to volunteer to lead situations may also not be sustainable given capacity challenges and competing priorities, even if they are larger in size. While Situation Table Co-Chairs do follow-up with situations, it is recommended that FOCUS Toronto further examine core agency involvement at each Situation Table and set guidelines or expectations for leading situations rather than leaving it up to table attendance or willingness to volunteer. Furthermore, unpacking the capacity limitations and willingness of core agencies will help to determine when to pull in other agencies or to support advocacy efforts such as in the areas of mental health, substance use and housing. Finally, identifying core and non-core agencies limits the number of agencies involved to prevent overwhelming service recipients.

Formalize and implement a direct referrals process: Direct referrals to services and supports outside of the Situation Tables can improve the impact of FOCUS Toronto on broader service system coordination and delivery. While the TPS has become more intentional with direct referrals over time, as described in the previous section, this practice has not yet been shared with or rolled out consistently as a practice by the partner agencies. In addition, there may be direct referral practices being used by other partner agencies that could be shared and/or adapted. There is an opportunity to learn more about direct referral processes, including the facilitators and barriers to direct referrals, and scale up the use of direct referrals by all partners. Doing so will maximize the use of FOCUS Toronto and community resources and foster partner agency collaboration and service delivery system efficiency.

Develop and routinely use a standard method for gathering and sharing information from partner agencies to support further collaboration and commitment: More than 160 representatives from partner agencies participated in this evaluation, providing highly insightful and relevant feedback regarding FOCUS Toronto's operations and outcomes. FOCUS Toronto has not consistently collected information regarding

¹² In this scenario, the sponsor agencies would have staff dedicated to delivering some of the interventions currently provided by the partner agencies or supporting the partner agencies to deliver the interventions in a more timely manner.

partner satisfaction/experience, largely due to staffing constraints since the COVID-19 pandemic. FOCUS Toronto is planning to reinstate this as a regular practice. Doing so will help to measure results year over year, identify trends and improvement opportunities, and collect qualitative stories that describe the impact of participating in FOCUS Toronto at the organizational level.

Given the immeasurable value brought to FOCUS Toronto for more than a decade by the partner agencies, coupled with challenges documented in this report with partner engagement, it is strongly recommended that a mechanism for securing partner feedback and a formal process for assessing partner satisfaction, experience, and ideas for further collaboration be established such as through an annual or bi-annual survey with findings and improvement recommendations reported back. In addition, a more proactive approach to setting targets for partner agencies in terms of referrals, meeting attendance rates, lead and assisting agency rates and measures to assess the impact that agencies have had on clients could be included. Key to developing the measurement framework is to pinpoint the areas desired performance improvement and setting standards and/or targets for these. Finally, results of the impact on community agencies can be communicated not only back to FOCUS Toronto partner agency representatives but also to community agency leadership and at different community sector tables to demonstrate the impact of agencies and to further encourage participation and commitment.

3.3.2 Impact on Individuals and Families

Evaluation Questions

- Has risk been reduced for clients after connection to services and over time?
- Have FOCUS Toronto interventions improved outcomes for clients?
- Are clients and family members satisfied? Was their experience positive?
- Would they recommend FOCUS Toronto to others?

Background

Since 2013, over 10,000 individuals, families and places involved in over 6,000 situations have been supported by FOCUS Toronto. In addition to the data analysis that shows that risk has been reduced for these individuals. To further assess the direct impact on clients and families, Situation Table participants were asked to approach a range of people who have been involved in FOCUS Toronto to complete and send in storybooks to UWGT or to participate in interviews with the evaluators. Appendix D provides a summary of the outcomes of impacts on individuals and families. Demographic information that could be used to identify the individuals has been removed from the table to preserve anonymity and a summary of their backgrounds is provided below.

A broad range of individuals provided impact stories: Thirteen (13) people in total participated in this evaluation. Eight (8) submitted storybooks and five (5) individuals spoke with the evaluators. A range of individuals participated in the evaluation. Key demographics/characteristics include:

- Eight of the 13 individuals were involved/open cases with FOCUS Toronto from June - December 2024, three were involved/open cases during the first half of 2024, and two were involved/open cases in 2022.

- Four individuals have lived in Toronto for two years, three for six years, two for 28-35 years and four from 41-50+ years. Areas of the City represented include: Rexdale, Black Creek, Scarborough, Downtown West, and York.
- Four individuals are 30-39 years of age, four are 40 – 50 years of age and four are 51-59 years old.
- Cultural backgrounds included eight individuals who identify as Black (African, Caribbean), four who identify as being from South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India) and one French-Canadian.
- About a third of the individuals who participated in this evaluation were single parents.
- Risks for these individuals included violence, homelessness, food security, mental health and police involvement.

A thematic analysis of the impact stories that were gathered during this evaluation shows that FOCUS Toronto has improved the safety and wellbeing of individuals and their families. Key themes include:

- a) **Risks have been reduced and safety has increased:** As noted previously in this report, risk was reduced for 78% of individuals, and we can infer that FOCUS Toronto interventions resulted in prompt connections to services that people might not have otherwise known about or successfully accessed. The quotations below, taken from the storybooks demonstrate how FOCUS Toronto has de-escalated risks and improved livelihoods.

"I now live in a stable and safe home, which has improved my overall wellbeing."

"We were at a tipping point and if we had not had FOCUS, X would have been arrested."

- b) **Awareness of services has improved:** The stories indicate that people very much appreciated becoming aware of the services and supports that could be made available to them through connections by/to FOCUS Toronto partners. Improved service navigation, through warm referrals is a benefit mentioned throughout the 13 stories.

"...the guidance and resources provided have lifted a heavy burden from my shoulders."

"...have people dealing with the research...it used to be hard-to-find resources."

"...they bring out help you didn't even know."

"...It helps parents to get to know the available supports provided."

- c) **Individuals were also very appreciative of how agencies were caring, inclusive and supportive over time:** The way in which FOCUS Toronto agencies work with individuals has been extremely impactful. They have created feelings of inclusion, reduced loneliness and increased trust.

"...nice to have another person who is not judgmental."

"This is a reliable resource."

"I felt heard, supported and I'm no longer navigating things alone."

- d) **FOCUS Toronto plays a key advocacy role for people to receive the services they need:** The stories indicate that people experience barriers in accessing services. By participating in FOCUS Toronto people are connected to professionals who understand the system and who can help link individuals to services that are not easy to navigate or access.

"I feel more confident in my ability to navigate challenges and make informed choices...given me a sense of belonging and reassurance, knowing I'm not alone in my journey."

"...more comfortable advocating for my son, feeling more inclusive."

"It's very powerful when someone says they are calling on behalf of you..."

"The Urdu-speaking counselor at agency X was also a great support."

"I can still rely on <name> to be on my side."

- e) **Culturally sensitive services are essential rapport-building, support and helping people to be successful as newcomers to Canada:** As mentioned earlier in this report, stories also corroborate focus group feedback that culturally appropriate supports:

"Being able to speak my language made me feel safe"

"As a newcomer single mom, everything is difficult for me in a new environment, new culture and situations...these services helped me through pieces of training, adapting the language and culture, so I can gain experience and enrich my skills further."

- f) **All of the individuals who participated in the evaluation would recommend FOCUS Toronto:** Client quotations illustrate high satisfaction with FOCUS and indicate clients would refer FOCUS to others who are seeking help with accessing services and/or to improve their situations.

"I would wholeheartedly recommend others I know to connect with these individuals and organizations. They really make you feel like you're part of a community that wants to see you succeed."

"Yes, I would because there are lots of people struggling to get by and survive. They value people's struggles and provide services to help them with their difficult situations and improve community resiliency and wellbeing."

"Yes, the agency has been very helpful for shelter and daily expenses. I highly recommend X from the agency X who assisted me in resolving the issues with the basement apartment community resiliency and wellbeing."

g) Involvement has had a profound impact on increasing people's confidence, ability to make decisions, and hope for the future: FOCUS Toronto has fundamentally improved wellbeing.

"I feel more confident in my ability to navigate challenges and make informed choices...given me a sense of belonging and reassurance, knowing I'm not alone in my journey."

"I feel empowered and realize that I am not alone...I am in more control, I can see a clear way."

"Now I feel I can make decisions...before I was in prison...I feel peace and freedom in my life"

"The support has given me tools and a stronger sense of self, helping me see my path more clearly and feel empowered to take real steps forward."

"The tools and support I received felt genuinely tailored to my needs, and the people involved made a real effort to understand my situation. It wasn't just about giving advice, it was about helping me to develop tools and confidence that I can carry forward,"

"I now see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles...my journey has taught me the power of resilience and I'm committed to embracing each new day with gratitude and optimism."

"This has instilled hope for the future as I now see new opportunities and pathways that were once unclear...I feel inspired and motivated to make the most of the tools and mentorship I've received. This support has truly been transformative."

Below are additional excerpts from the storybooks that describe the situations that individuals were experiencing, as well as changes for individuals, their families and communities.

Impact Story A: *"100% helpful. I'm sure there's a lot of people suffering like me. I used to think I can't get own place, it's expensive, and I thought I would die suffering by my son's mental abuse. I never thought there would be help. This place is amazing, and now I have my own housing"*

Impact Story B: *"After arriving in Canada, I was in a toxic and abusive relationship with my husband. I was emotionally and physically tortured One day, he got physically violent and kicked me in my face with his knee so badly, I bled all over my clothes and bed. My face was injured badly. I think I have overcome my mental and financial situation by the help of services I feel like I can survive my current odd situation and start a new life. I feel hopeful."*

Impact Story C: *"The support from FOCUS Toronto has had a profound impact on me, both personally and emotionally. It provided me with a sense of stability and reassurance during a time when I felt overwhelmed and unsure of how to move forward. The guidance and resources I received helped me address challenges more effectively, boosting my confidence and*

Impact on my family, friends and community

I can properly raise my children's lives and provide them with education, and necessities.



empowering me to take control of my situation. Emotionally, I felt heard, understood, and supported, which significantly reduced my stress and anxiety. The program also opened up new opportunities and helped me see a clearer path for my future. It gave me the tools I needed to navigate my circumstances with resilience and optimism. The impact of this support is ongoing, as it continues to inspire and motivate me to grow and achieve my goals. The support from FOCUS Toronto has had a positive ripple effect on my family. By helping me feel more stable and confident, it has created a calmer and more supportive environment at home. The stress and uncertainty I was carrying before have been significantly reduced, which has allowed me to be more present and engaged with my family. The tools and resources I've gained have also helped me better support my family members, whether by sharing knowledge, accessing new opportunities, or simply fostering a sense of hope and optimism. Overall, the guidance I received has not only improved my own wellbeing but has also strengthened the dynamics within my family, creating a more harmonious and resilient foundation for all of us."

Opportunities

Clarify approach with family members of individuals being supported by FOCUS Toronto: Situations brought forward to FOCUS typically focus on one person at a time but can involve other individuals. A few people who had supports from FOCUS for their children indicated that they also needed support but did not have any. It is unclear whether these individuals also experienced AER. It would benefit FOCUS to also check-in with other family members to determine how they could be supported, if outside of FOCUS.

"was not helpful for my son...focused on taking care of my needs."

"I would have liked it for me too."

Develop and use a standard method for gathering and reporting on information about the experiences of individuals and families - Data about clients' experience with FOCUS Toronto, as well as changes resulting from connections to services made possible by FOCUS Toronto, is routinely not being collected and as such, the impact of FOCUS Toronto on clients, families or communities is difficult to ascertain.

It is strongly recommended that FOCUS Toronto develop a standardized method for gathering information about the experiences of individuals, including their satisfaction with the services/wrap-around supports received and the longer-term impact of these services on their lives. It is recognized that there may be challenges in establishing an ongoing, consistent and objective process that is sensitive to privacy and confidentiality. One strategy would be to have a neutral third party follow up with an individual/family at a consistent but sufficient length of time after their case is closed (e.g., three or six months) using a standardized interview tool or survey. Consent regarding this follow up interview or survey could be obtained from the individual at the time that they are referred to the Situation Table by the originating agency or by the lead agency at the time of the intervention.

By bringing the client voice to supplement its rich store of quantitative data, FOCUS can create powerful stories of impact and use these to advance its advocacy priorities and demonstrate its value to community safety and wellbeing.

Create a dedicated process to better serve people experiencing complex and chronically elevated risk situations: This report has already described the tensions expressed by evaluation participants regarding FOCUS Toronto’s role in relation to situations of complex and chronically elevated risk. Many evaluation participants recommended that FOCUS Toronto put in place a process for ensuring complex and chronic risk situations are addressed appropriately. This includes recognizing that FOCUS Toronto may not be the appropriate intervention for these cases and establishing stronger referral pathways to other care coordination tables such as SPIDER.

“Can we segment populations to ... other tables/initiatives. The future state for mental health (situations) make FOCUS one partner in a broader hub ... (this) will take buy in.”

Interviewee (TPS)

3.3.3 Impact on Community Safety and Wellbeing

Background

FOCUS Toronto is modelled on international and national best practices in Collaborative Risk Driven Community Safety. As one of the first and busiest tables in Canada has also set the standard for comparator tables. The purpose of the Situation Table is to bring together diverse service providers to identify situations of AER, be these at the individual, family or community level, and prevent negative outcomes from occurring. However, FOCUS Toronto has also been identified as a key strategy in Toronto’s Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (SAFE TO), which seeks to reduce harm and victimization through collaborative risk-driven approaches such as FOCUS Toronto.

Evaluation Questions

- Has communication between FOCUS Toronto and existing community networks increased?
- Has community safety, security and wellbeing increased?

Strengths

Contribution to community wellbeing: Evaluation participants are in strong agreement that FOCUS is making an important contribution to community wellbeing. For example, **92%** of survey participants indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, **“FOCUS Toronto has contributed to improved wellbeing in the community”**. At the same time, it should be noted that, in the absence of specific community wellbeing measures, the evidence provided in this evaluation is anecdotal, but nonetheless compelling.

“Healthy families and individuals drive community wellbeing. The service coordination FOCUS offers is essential to increase community wellbeing, while the data collected from FOCUS ensures that the needs of different communities throughout the city are made visible.”

Partner Survey Respondent

Contribution to community safety: As with community wellbeing, FOCUS Toronto has not established measures for community safety as part of its performance management framework. While some of those interviewed

“FOCUS has taught our members that there is a pathway outside of apprehending; we have an opportunity to make referrals now”

Interviewee (TPS)

“Feeling of the community being supported by agencies gives a sense of safety and being heard especially when there is an immediate result.”

Partner Survey Respondent

for this evaluation provided anecdotal feedback about the impact of FOCUS Toronto on community safety, only **79%** of survey respondents indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, **“Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables are helping to reduce or prevent incidents of crime and improve community safety.”** In fact, this is one of the lowest ranked statements in the survey. Of note, the study conducted by Thompson and Leroux (2020)⁹ examined 173 clients referred to FOCUS Toronto between 2014 and 2020. The study found that the average number of police contacts pre-referral ranged from 0 to 7 police contacts and the average number of police contacts post-referral ranged from 0 to 1.50. Overall, the study concluded that a referral to FOCUS Toronto results in a statistically significant reduction in police contacts and as such that FOCUS Toronto is contributing to community safety.

Impact on local service communication, collaboration and coordination: Evaluation participants are in strong agreement that FOCUS Toronto is contributing to improved communication and service coordination at the local level as well as improved communication and relationships between the TPS, service providers and community members.

“Opened a lot of communication between officers and community. Coming from different countries ... many (people are) afraid of police. Opened a very good door to engage police, community and agencies. Opened up different avenues to have different resources and approach community in a different way. Better relationship”

Focus group participant

Opportunities

Establish a set of performance metrics for FOCUS Toronto as a whole and feasible measures for safety and wellbeing. Overall, evaluation participants agree that a performance measurement framework, outlining FOCUS’ process and outcome measures and targets, should be developed and regularly monitored. In terms of the survey, **“Clear performance indicators/metrics of success”** was identified as the third most important requirement for FOCUS Toronto’s long-term sustainability, followed by **“Improved data collection, monitoring and reporting of output and outcome data”**. This means that quantitative data and qualitative data, including client impact data, needs to be collected consistently, comprehensively, and reliably by FOCUS Toronto. Ideally, accountability for performance expectations for each metric should be incorporated into Partner Agreements. Minimally, a semi-annual assessment of performance against expectations should be conducted, with performance results and reports presented and discussed with the co-chairs, the partner agencies and the Steering Committee.

Establish Targets for:

- Time to first contact
- # of referrals
- % of overall risk reduction
- % of return situations – same/different risk
- Emergency Department
- Calls for police service
- Calls for emergency service
- Improved mental health (self perception score)

It is interesting that only **79%** of survey respondents agree or completely agree that **“FOCUS Toronto is helping to reduce or prevent crime”**, especially in light of pre-post analysis indicating that TPS calls for service decrease following FOCUS interventions. This suggests that partner agencies may not have been made aware of this research or may not agree that calls for service as an appropriate indicator for crime prevention or reduction. In either case, clear measures and targets for both safety and wellbeing including but not limited to calls to TPS are needed. As discussed in the Methodology section of this report, it would

also be beneficial to review Safe TO outcomes related to systemic reform and identify whether there are measurable indicators related to these that are within FOCUS Toronto's Sphere of Control or Influence⁸.

Create an approach to advocate for systemic change: Feedback from evaluation participants indicates that FOCUS Toronto can take steps to more effectively address systemic issues. While **82%** of survey respondents agree or completely agree with the statement, ***“FOCUS Toronto has helped to identify and address the systemic issues that impact people who are in situations of AER”***, it is **one of the lowest ranked statements** in the survey.

While FOCUS Toronto data and stories are often presented at City Council, many interview participants indicated that FOCUS Toronto can and should do a better job mining its data and presenting it for strategic advocacy purposes. As noted above, there is an opportunity for FOCUS to:

- Strengthen its leadership structure and capacity to advance inter-sectoral systemic issues;
- Establish a process for routinely collecting, analyzing, and strategically presenting information on its performance and on systemic barriers and issues, and
- Convene with local and inter-governmental leadership tables to advance systems change priorities.

3.3.4 Summary

Overall, the evaluation found that FOCUS Toronto has connected over 10,000 individuals, family members and places to services that they may not have otherwise known. The data shows the types of services that are needed and where the systemic barriers due to system capacity challenges lie. While impact data has not been collected routinely by FOCUS Toronto, the interviews, surveys and focus groups conducted in 2013, 2020 and 2025 all indicate that there have been significant impacts for partner agencies, people and communities.

From a partner agency perspective, collaboration has generally been sustained over the past 10 years although there is limited data to know the length of ongoing involvement of individual agencies and the extent of their involvement. From a service coordination standpoint, multiple services are being arranged for individuals primarily by a small number of lead agencies, and capacity concerns have been raised by these same agencies.

What's exciting is that some partner agencies are making direct referrals. This practice, which was not observed during the pilot evaluation of FOCUS Rexdale in 2015, indicates that collaboration is taking place outside of Situation Tables and suggests that FOCUS is contributing to improved service system coordination. Continuing to gather and report on this information from core agencies would be beneficial for measuring community capacity building.

The stories gathered from individuals and family members on the impact on their safety and wellbeing indeed demonstrate the value of FOCUS Toronto including but are beyond connection to services that they did not know existed or could not find both for newcomers and those who have lived in Toronto their entire lives. In addition to the service navigation and advocacy that FOCUS Toronto partner agencies provided, agencies have empowered individuals with confidence in decision-making and hope for a better future – all tangible impacts.

The impact of FOCUS Toronto on community safety and wellbeing was the most challenging to evaluate. Beyond some survey findings that point to positive impacts that are being made in this area, clear metrics

and the corresponding data was not available to make an assessment. A reduction in AER and decreased calls to TPS could serve as proxies for increased community safety however, a more thoughtful approach to mapping out the impacts intended by FOCUS Toronto, and its 'Sphere of Control/Influence/Interest'⁸ and 'Ceiling of Accountability' would be helpful.

Overall, the major recommendation regarding impact is that a performance measurement framework be put in place that includes mechanisms to gather impact data, both qualitative and quantitative, on a regular basis. Nevertheless, taking the time to share the positive impact story that FOCUS Toronto has had on the lives of people, the service delivery system and the potential for contributing to system reform to both those involved and others who have yet to be involved will demonstrate FOCUS Toronto value.

3.4 Growth & Sustainability

Evaluation Questions:

- Has the development of each FOCUS Toronto Situation Table in various neighborhoods been effective and efficient? Has the FOCUS Toronto expansion been effective and efficient?
- How can the outcomes of FOCUS Toronto be sustained?
- Is the FOCUS Toronto initiative aligned with public policy and priorities and integrated and synergistic with other related initiatives? Does the human service sector collaborate with and support FOCUS Toronto?
- Is FOCUS Toronto influencing public policy?
- Is the cost of FOCUS reasonable in relation to the benefits?

Strengths

Thoughtful data informed expansion: FOCUS Toronto has spent more than ten years scaling the initiative across the city and with the advent of the seventh table late in 2024 is considered by the sponsor agencies to be city-wide in scope. FOCUS Toronto leadership chose to scale up gradually, cognizant of capacity considerations among the sponsors and the community agency partners. It also drew upon neighbourhood and TPS data to inform the approach taken to introducing new tables.

Cost effectiveness: Empirical research has not been conducted regarding FOCUS Toronto's return on investment. However, the study conducted by Thompson and Leroux (2020)⁹ concluded that "***On average, FOCUS Toronto decreases the frequency of police contacts among clients referred by the Toronto Police Service ... FOCUS Toronto has achieved its objective in alleviating some of the system-level burden imposed by high-need individuals across priority neighbourhoods in Toronto***". Further, there was unanimous agreement among those engaged in this evaluation that FOCUS Toronto is a good use of time and money.

Partner commitment to sustainability: After a decade of operations as an initiative almost fully dependent on the in-kind contributions of sponsor and partner agencies delivering services in some of Toronto's most high need neighbourhoods, FOCUS Toronto remains well positioned for sustainability. In terms of survey respondents, **98%** indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement, "***FOCUS Toronto should continue in my area***" and, as was already noted, **98%** also indicated that they agree or completely agree with the statement "***My organization will continue to participate in FOCUS Toronto.***"

Opportunities

Prevent returning situations with same risk: As discussed earlier in this report, there are situations returning to FOCUS Toronto with people presenting with the same risks. Although a small percentage and the time for the situation to return to a Situation Table ranges from 40% within 6 months to 43% between 6 months and a year, it would benefit FOCUS Toronto to examine these cases more specifically to determine whether there are any patterns in these situations. Furthermore, longer-term case management support may also reduce the number of these return cases.

Transition from being highly operational in focus to strategic to deepen FOCUS Toronto's impact (while sustaining operations): As has been discussed throughout this report, FOCUS Toronto is a mature model; its processes work, it is supporting a good number of AER situations, and it is reducing risk by connecting clients to resources. However, with city-wide coverage achieved with the introduction of the seventh table it is important for FOCUS Toronto to review the recommendations in this report and develop its vision and strategy for the next ten years, with a focus on sustainability and demonstrating its vital contribution to Safe To. Some suggestions include:

- Strengthen partner agency participation and engagement to help improve capacity challenges
- Consider how to segment different types of situations such as chronic complex populations and provide corresponding solutions
- Develop and implement a robust performance measurement framework
- Improve coordination with SPIDER and other collaborative tables to ensure effective interventions for situations involving complex and chronically elevated risk
- Establish processes and structures for inter-governmental engagement and advancing systemic issues with the appropriate leaders and decision makers.

Actively work to influence public policy: Interviewees, particularly those with a long history of involvement in Situation Tables, spoke convincingly about the missed opportunity with FOCUS Toronto's lack of strategic outreach, advocacy and public policy work. These evaluation participants understand that FOCUS Toronto, while it plays a critical role in reducing risk, several other factors including the availability of system resources that are limiting the ability to support community safety and wellbeing.

There is a critical opportunity for FOCUS Toronto to leverage its data, expertise and reputation to formulate and advance public policy change along with funders to provide long lasting solutions to the systemic issues FOCUS Toronto interventions cannot address, including those related to food, housing and income insecurity and the lack of services and supports to address people experience complex health, mental health and substance use challenges.

"We all know that this process is working. Can we now have a conversation with the Steering Committee to embed a process that enables us to measure outcomes. This will be resource based ... how do we build it into the framework of the tables. This is what I want to see as the agenda for the quarterly meetings of the Steering Committee."

"Does not need get bigger; needs to get better; doesn't need to scale up"

Interviewees

As discussed previously dedicated resources need to be invested in policy and advocacy work, including the collection of impact stories from partner agencies and individuals served by FOCUS Toronto.

“Need to see how the model applies in different situations to maximize its effectiveness and be clear about when it should not be used. Do some work on intergovernmental advocacy and use the data and insights that come from partners in a way that will advance the model. System reform work needs to happen ... otherwise providers burn out. There are big glaring gaps in our system. The situations challenging FOCUS are because of those gaps. The opportunity is to work on those systemic pieces”.

Interviewee

4.0 Recommendations

The findings of this evaluation indicate that FOCUS Toronto has been a highly successful initiative over the past decade. Beginning with one Situation Table in Rexdale and growing to seven tables in 2024 that span the GTA demonstrates the need and ongoing relevance of FOCUS Toronto, and the enablers to its success including the leadership, collaboration between partner agencies, and commitment to continuing improving the lives of people experiencing AER despite capacity and systemic barriers. FOCUS Toronto is an operationally sustainable initiative because of the passion, skills and results it has demonstrated.

The major recommendation for FOCUS Toronto, now that its Situation Table operations are mature, is to consider how to further broaden and deepen its impact. This includes:

- Purposefully considering the future vision and strategy that will enable FOCUS Toronto to achieve the next level of impact. This includes tackling the most challenging areas identified in this report including how to support different population cohorts including those experiencing complex chronic situations, addressing systemic issues that cannot be addressed by this initiative alone and at an operational level, and leveraging the success of FOCUS Toronto to communicate and advocate for policy and funding changes.
- Continuing to broaden and deepen the impact of Situation Tables effectiveness and efficiency by advancing governance of the initiative (refer to Appendix E), through adding new partners, solution how to reduce capacity limitations, efficient usage of partner resources including supporting direct referrals by all agencies, and to improve cultural competency
- Advancing and building a robust performance measurement framework based on an updated Theory of Change, Logic Model, metrics and mechanisms to gather impact data and stories that can be used to effect systemic change.

Enabling all the above includes acknowledging and celebrating FOCUS Toronto’s impact to date and proactively sharing its story at the right leadership tables consisting of decision and policy makers who are also working on the same goals. By focusing on a system level, FOCUS Toronto can make a greater impact on overall community safety and wellbeing.

A summary of recommendations is provided in Table 7 below and a proposed high-level implementation plan is found in Table 8.

Table 7. Summary of Recommendations for FOCUS Toronto

Structure	<i>FOCUS Toronto Governance, Leadership, and Management</i>
	1. Implement leadership structures and processes that can advance long term solutions to systemic issues with other orders of government. 2. Review and refine FOCUS Toronto’s vision, mission, values and overarching strategies/goals for the coming 10 years. 3. Better define FOCUS Toronto’s unique value proposition to community safety and wellbeing in the context of other planning tables and collective impact initiatives.

	<i>Partner Agency Participation</i> 4. Recruit additional partners to Situation Tables including public health, mental health, hospital and housing partners. 5. Deepen the focus on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) by securing additional partners with expertise in serving diverse populations. 6. Strengthen partner attendance and engagement. <i>Resourcing</i> 7. Invest resources in policy and advocacy work, including the gathering and sharing of impact stories on a routine basis. 8. Secure access to translation resources.
Processes	<i>FOCUS Toronto Processes</i> <i>Policies, Protocols, Tools, Cultural Appropriateness</i> 9. Establish guidance for direct referrals outside of Situation Tables. 10. Review Acutely Elevated Risk (AER) definition and processes and determine actions regarding situations of chronically elevated risk. 11. Strengthen cultural competency through focused discussions, training and accountability (related to Recommendation #8). 12. Strengthen the role of the referral agency in interventions to improve ability to connect with clients. 13. Advance the application of privacy and information sharing policies and processes to specific situations (families, language barriers, longer term situations). <i>Referrals and Types of Situations</i> 14. Formalize a referral process with SPIDER for complex, chronic situations 15. Identify the priority populations that FOCUS Toronto can best serve <i>Interventions</i> 16. Strengthen partner agency engagement as lead and assisting agencies (related to Recommendation #25) 17. Improve time to first contact. 18. Provide translation/interpretation support (related to Recommendation 8) 19. Develop a standard for case length that aligns with FOCUS Toronto's mandate, populations served and agency capacity. 20. Strengthen follow up processes for people who cannot be reached or who refused consent. 21. Strengthen processes for responding to chronic and complex risk situations (related to Recommendation #14)

	<i>Continuous Quality Improvement</i> 22. Develop and use a continuous quality improvement approach and strengthened accountability agreements for partner agencies. 23. Establish and performance management framework based on an updated Theory of Change, Logic Model and set of process and outcomes measures and targets. 24. Develop an approach to regularly assess client satisfaction/experience and outcomes (related to Recommendation #7).
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Impact on Partner Agencies</i> 25. Examine and address agency involvement and capacity challenges at each Situation Table (related to Recommendation #16). 26. Formalize and implement a direct referrals process. 27. Develop and routinely use a standard method for gathering information from partner agencies to support increased collaboration and commitment. 28. Share the positive impacts of FOCUS Toronto with partner agencies, demonstrating the impact that they have made. <i>Impact on Individuals and Families</i> 29. Clarify approach with family members of individuals being supported by FOCUS Toronto. 30. Develop and use a standardized method for gathering information about the experiences of individuals and families. 31. Create a dedicated process to better support people experiencing complex and chronically elevated situations. <i>Impact on Community Safety & Well-Being</i> 32. Establish a set of feasible outcome measures and performance metrics for safety and wellbeing 33. Create an approach to advocate for systemic change (related to Recommendations #1 and #21)
<i>Growth & Sustainability</i>	34. Prevent returning situations with same risk 35. Shift from an operational focus on scaling to a strategic focus to deepen FOCUS Toronto's impact while sustaining its operations. 36. Actively work to influence public policy (related to Recommendations #1, #7, #21 and 24)

Table 8. Proposed High-level Implementation Plan for FOCUS Toronto

Over the Next 12 Months	1 - 2 Years	3+ Years
• Convene with partners to design the future vision and strategy for FOCUS Toronto going forward • Develop a concise set of “Impact Stories” to be used during communication and advocacy efforts • Implement various “quick win” improvements to Situation Table operations including AER definitions, privacy and confidentiality, and language interpretation • Develop a performance measurement framework underpinned by an updated Theory of Change, Logic Model and metrics/measures and set stretch targets.	• Develop and implement focused advocacy and public policy strategies including leadership. • Advance work on defining the population that FOCUS Toronto can best serve. • Implement the performance measurement framework, standards and targets. • Develop focused research studies to understand the correlation of factors and year over year changes.	• Commission an independent evaluation to assess FOCUS’ performance (i.e. progress towards short-, medium- and long-term outcomes based on planned indicators and metrics as well as policy, funding and system reform impacts.

5.0 Future Considerations

At the time of the FOCUS Rexdale evaluation, the expansion of the Situation Table model to cover the GTA was already considered. The sustained passion, dedication and commitment to growing and developing FOCUS Toronto has largely been realized. Results over the past decade show that FOCUS Toronto as an operational model works. FOCUS Toronto has also served as a model for other strategies and initiatives in Toronto, Ontario and across Canada. Beyond sustaining what is in place, the question for FOCUS Toronto is how it can make an even greater impact. Below are some strategic questions that are offered for consideration by FOCUS Toronto partners and potential future partners at the local, provincial and federal levels:

- What is the future vision and strategy for FOCUS Toronto over the next 10 years given community needs and trends?
- What is FOCUS Toronto's unique value proposition? What makes it distinct?
- What does success look like for FOCUS Toronto over the next decade?
- What are the key levers for increasing the influence of FOCUS Toronto?
- What are the largest obstacles preventing the achievement of future FOCUS Toronto goals?
- What are the shared priorities and partnerships needed to achieve the next level of impact?
- What dedicated resources are needed to achieve these goals?

Appendix A: Documents & Data Reviewed

1. FOCUS Toronto Overviews (2013-24)
2. FOCUS Toronto Annual Reviews and Calendars (2017, 2018)
3. FOCUS Toronto Annual Report (2020)
4. FOCUS Toronto Work Plans (2019, 2020)
5. FOCUS Toronto Messaging (2020)
6. FOCUS Toronto Annual Plans (2021, 2022, 2023)
7. FOCUS Toronto Report (2018)
8. FOCUS Toronto Intervention Quality (2019-23)
9. FOCUS Toronto Police Occurrence Data
10. FOCUS Toronto Attendance
11. FOCUS Toronto Systemic Barrier Analysis
12. FOCUS Toronto Expansion Considerations (2018, 2020, 2023)
13. FOCUS Toronto Health and Growth Strategies (2020, 2021)
14. FOCUS Toronto Training Co-Chair Training Materials & Videos (2020-24)
15. FOCUS Toronto Huddle Training Materials (2024)
16. FOCUS Toronto Steering Committee Agendas and Minutes (2021-24)
17. FOCUS Toronto Agency Lists (2024), Organization Chart (2024), Partner Agreement (2022)
18. FOCUS Toronto Partner Memorandum of Understanding, Draft 6
19. FOCUS & SPIDER Annual Event – System Reforms and Recommendations (2016)
20. FOCUS Toronto First Quarter Systems Update (January 1, 2017 – March 31, 2017)
21. Preliminary Findings Response – Ryerson Report
22. FOCUS Toronto Thread Report (2024)
23. FOCUS Toronto Data (2013-24)
24. SPIDER – One Pager
25. Toronto Police Service – Community Partnerships & Engagement Unit/TPS Divisions – FOCUS Toronto 2023, Year End Report
26. Demkiw, Myron. Multi-Sector Collaboration to Prevent Violent Extremism – A Framework to Enhance Community Safety and Wellbeing in Canada’s Largest City (2023).

Appendix B: Parties Interviewed

FOCUS Toronto Steering Committee

Nation Cheong, VP, Community Opportunities and Mobilization at United Way of Greater Toronto Area
Scott McKean, Associate Director, Violence Prevention & SafeTO, City of Toronto
Mohamed Shuriye, Director, Community Safety and Wellbeing City of Toronto
Clara Ganamitore – Manager Safe TO & Community Risk Intervention, City of Toronto,
Gregory Watts, Superintendent, Toronto Police Services

FOCUS Toronto Coordination Team

Brian Smith, Acting Staff Sergeant, Risk Intervention Coordinator, Toronto Police Services
Evan Smith, Senior Manager, FOCUS Toronto & Regional Situation Tables, United Way of Greater Toronto
Matthew Carrol, Supervisor Community Safety and Wellbeing Unit City of Toronto

FOCUS Toronto Co-Chairs

Dan Ramos, Toronto Police Service - Community Partnerships and Engagement Unit
Jenifferjit Sidhu, Toronto Police Service - Community Partnerships and Engagement Unit
Melinda Mantle, Toronto Police Service - Community Partnerships and Engagement Unit
Sophia Brown, City of Toronto - Community Safety and Wellbeing Unit
Julia Fremeau, City of Toronto - Community Safety and Wellbeing Unit
Daniel Reed, United Way Greater Toronto

Other Key Informants

Euan McDermitt, FOCUS Coordinator, Toronto Police Services
Don Belanger, Acting staff superintendent, Toronto Police Services
Anthony Paletta, Unit Commander, Community Partnerships and Engagement, Toronto Police Services
Sarah James, Manager of Community Programs and Engagement, John Howard Society

Appendix C: Data Collection Tools

Survey - Partner Agencies

Section 1: Introduction

Furthering Our Community by Uniting Services (FOCUS), established in 2013, aims to reduce crime, victimization, harm and improve community resiliency in the Toronto area. Led by the City of Toronto (the City), United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) and Toronto Police Service (TPS), the objective is to identify individuals or families experiencing complex vulnerabilities that cannot be addressed by a single agency alone. FOCUS Toronto unites agencies across five different sectors each week to provide a targeted, wrap-around approach to individuals and families experiencing high levels of risk for crisis or trauma. FOCUS Toronto is currently comprised of six FOCUS Torontos located in Rexdale, Black Creek, Downtown East, Downtown West, Scarborough and York.

At this ten-year mark in its history, an impact evaluation has been launched to consider FOCUS Toronto's impact on the clients it has served through its interventions, as well its impact on the six FOCUS neighbourhoods, service organizations and Toronto's service system more broadly. The evaluation is being conducted by Vision & Results Inc., a consulting firm specializing in evaluation, operations improvement, strategy and innovation.

The input of all partner agencies is important to this evaluation. As such, you are invited to complete this survey. The survey will take about 20 minutes of your time and will be open until XXXX. The survey is confidential – only the consulting team from Vision & Results will see your responses. Aggregate data and over-arching themes will be shared with FOCUS Toronto leadership and staff to help determine how best to improve and evolve FOCUS Toronto.

Thank you for your time and support,

The FOCUS Toronto Coordination Team
Evon, Brian and Mathew

Section Two: About Your Organization

1. Area:
 - ☐ Black Creek
 - ☐ Downtown East
 - ☐ Downtown West
 - ☐ Scarborough
 - ☐ Rexdale
 - ☐ York
2. Sector (primary)
 - ☐ Primary Health
 - ☐ Mental Health
 - ☐ Substance Use

- Employment
- Hospital
- Housing
- Police
- Emergency Services
- Library
- Recreation
- Legal
- Justice
- Food (food banks, food security, etc.)
- Education (school or school board)
- Other _____

3. Age Focus – check all that apply

- Children
- Youth
- Adults
- Seniors

7. Role

- a. Front line
- b. Supervisory
- c. Senior management/Executive

Section 3: About FOCUS Toronto

Question 1 - 20: Scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree); not applicable option available

1. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table involves the right agencies
2. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table has addressed R&E in all aspects of our structure and agency involvement.
3. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table processes, policies and procedures are used consistently.
4. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table processes, policies and procedures are effective.
5. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table's principles and practices reflect R&E, culturally appropriate and trauma informed principles.
6. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table receives the appropriate number of referrals.
7. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table receives the appropriate types of referrals (i.e., meet AER threshold).
8. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table meetings are well run and make good use of time.

9. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table interventions are typically provided to clients in a timely manner (i.e., within 48 hours).
10. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table interventions effectively connect clients to the resources that they need.
11. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table interventions reduce risk for clients.
12. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table interventions are well coordinated by the lead and supporting agencies.
13. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table partner agencies have built and sustained collaborative, ongoing partnerships.
14. FOCUS Toronto Situation Table has helped service delivery in the area to be more coordinated.
15. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table has contributed to improved community safety.
16. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table has contributed to improved wellbeing in the community.
17. Our FOCUS Toronto Situation Table is helping to reduce or prevent incidents of crime.
18. My agency will continue to participate in the FOCUS Toronto initiative.
19. FOCUS Toronto has helped to identify and address the systemic issues that impact people who are in situations of AER.
20. FOCUS Toronto should continue in my area.
21. More FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables should be set up in other areas in the City of Toronto. Indicate areas:

Question 21 – 22: Ratings Scale (rate the improvement priorities in order of importance) Which of the following is most important to undertake to improve the functioning of FOCUS Toronto?

- a. Recruit new agencies to the FOCUS Toronto to address unmet needs/gaps
- b. Improve onboarding and orientation of new agency representatives (including those who replace or step in for other agency representatives)
- c. Streamline the process (i.e., presenting or voting on a case) used by partner agencies for bringing a case to the FOCUS Toronto
- d. Enhance training (i.e., ongoing training) regarding FOCUS Toronto definitions, processes, etc.
- e. Improve awareness raising/training for management and staff at partner agencies
- f. Improve R&E practices such as anti-racism, culturally sensitive and trauma informed approaches.
- g. Enhance trust among the agencies
- h. Other (Comment) _____ -

22. What does FOCUS Toronto most need to be sustainable over the long term (Rank the following)?
- a. Improved data collection, monitoring and reporting of output and outcome data
 - b. Clearer value proposition
 - c. Clear performance indicators/metrics of success
 - d. Clearer definitions and procedures
 - e. Stronger engagement of partner agencies
 - f. Improved staffing (i.e., to coordinate engagement with member agencies, to coordinate data collection, monitoring and reporting)
 - g. Other (Comment) _____
23. In your own words please describe the greatest impact of FOCUS Toronto on individuals, families or the community (Comment)
24. Do you have any other input that you would like to share at this time (Comment)

Interview Guide – Additional Parties

Name

Organization

1. What is your organization's relationship to FOCUS Toronto?
2. Reflecting on our knowledge of FOCUS Toronto:
 - What are the key strengths of FOCUS Toronto? What's working well?
 - What about FOCUS Toronto could be improved?
3. What has been the impact of FOCUS Toronto on clients and communities?
4. HAS FOCUS Toronto had an impact on community safety and wellbeing? What are indicators of this?
5. Has FOCUS Toronto had an impact on or effectively addressed systemic issues/challenges for individuals or families at acutely elevated risk?
6. What is the future of FOCUS Toronto – what does it require for sustainability and impact?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about FOCUS Toronto at this time?

Interview Guide - FOCUS Toronto Steering Committee, Coordination Team and Co-Chairs

Name

Organization

1. Why is your organization participating in FOCUS Toronto?
2. In terms of its structure (leadership and Situation Tables) and processes:
 - a. What are the key strengths of FOCUS Toronto? What's working well?
 - b. What about FOCUS Toronto could be improved?
3. What has been the impact of FOCUS Toronto on clients and communities?
4. What has been the impact of the FOCUS Toronto on your organization?
5. Has community safety and wellbeing improved? What are indicators of this?
6. Has FOCUS Toronto identified and addressed the systemic issues/challenges facing clients?
7. What is the future of FOCUS Toronto – what does it require for sustainability and impact?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share about FOCUS Toronto at this time?

Discussion Guide – Partner Agency Focus Groups

Name:

Organization:

How long with the Situation Table?

1. Are the right agencies and representatives sitting at your FOCUS Toronto Situation Table?
 - a. What other agencies should participate?
 - b. What could be done to increase participation/attendance?
2. Has your Situation Table meaningfully integrated principles and practices that reflect anti-racist, culturally appropriate and trauma informed principles?
3. Have the right numbers of situations been brought to your FOCUS Toronto Situation Table? Why or why not?
4. How well are the Situation Table partner agencies working together to coordinate interventions?
 - a. What's working well? What could be improved?
 - b. How effective are the threads?
5. How timely are interventions?
6. How do you know if a Situation Table intervention is successful? What is getting in the way of successful interventions?
7. What has been the impact of this FOCUS Toronto Situation Table on clients? Describe a successful and not successful client experience.
8. What evidence is there to show that FOCUS Toronto has helped to:
 - a. Increase community safety
 - b. Increased community wellbeing
 - c. Reduced harm and victimization
 - d. Improve collaboration and service coordination
9. What are the systemic issues/challenges for your FOCUS Toronto Situation Table and should/could be done about these systemic issues?
10. Do you interact from other FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables? How? What has been the impact of this interaction?
11. Moving forward, what can be done to strengthen FOCUS Toronto?
 - a. Should it be expanded? Why or why not?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share about FOCUS Toronto

INTRODUCTION

You have been invited to participate in an evaluation of FOCUS Toronto. Your participation in the evaluation is voluntary. The information below is provided to help you decide whether to participate.

What is FOCUS Toronto?

FOCUS Toronto is a community-based initiative started in 2013 that connects people who are at risk of victimization or harm to services. FOCUS Toronto is made up of hundreds of community organizations that participate in FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables located in Rexdale, Black Creek, Downtown East, Downtown West, Scarborough and York. The Situation Tables meet every week to connect people to services to help them get through challenging life situations. FOCUS Toronto organizations come from the housing, employment, health care, social services, settlement, food security, mental health, addictions, domestic violence, police, legal, and other sectors.

What is the FOCUS Toronto Impact Evaluation?

A third-party independent evaluation of FOCUS Toronto is being conducted. The purpose of the evaluation is to understand the impact of FOCUS Toronto on the health and well-being of people that have been involved in the initiative, as well as the impact on the organizations and neighborhoods involved. The evaluation will help to improve FOCUS Toronto for other people who are at risk for harm or victimization and need FOCUS Toronto's support. Vision & Results Inc., an independent advisory services company specializing in evaluation has been hired to complete this evaluation.

What is the purpose of this Booklet?

This **booklet** has been developed to help people share their experience with the FOCUS Toronto initiative. The stories that are collected through these booklets are contributing to the evaluation FOCUS Toronto. Approximately 20 people who have been connected to FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables are being invited to complete a booklet. You are one of the people invited by a partner agency to participate in the evaluation.

What is required of me and what do I receive for completing this Booklet?

You are asked to share your experiences with FOCUS Toronto in this booklet. We want to hear your voice. Please use your own words and pictures/images to share what you experienced and what you felt, the good, the not so good and everything in between.

It will take about an hour to complete the booklet.

For completing this booklet, you will be offered \$50. The \$50 will be given to you by either direct deposit or cheque. The person who invited you to participate in the evaluation will help you with this process so that you can receive your payment as quickly as possible.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

If you have any questions about the evaluation you can speak to the person who invited you to participate in the evaluation.

How will my story be respected by the Evaluation Team?

- We value your individual experiences and are asking you to tell us about your unique experience with FOCUS Toronto.
- We respect you and your courage to share your experience with us.
- We seek to understand what you have or are experiencing and will not judge you or your story in anyway. There are no right or wrong answers.
- We are mindful of our assumptions and biases and recognize how they may shape our thinking, our conclusions, and our way of seeing the world. We put aside any pre-conceived thoughts about your experience and on solutions for the initiative can be improved.

How will my privacy be protected by the Evaluation Team?

- Your participation is voluntary. You do not need to provide any information you don't want to. Feel free to leave questions blank.
- Your information is anonymous, and you will not be asked to provide your name.
- Your information will not be shared with anyone at FOCUS Toronto. It will be used by the Evaluation Team only.
- Some of your words and pictures/illustrations may be used in the Evaluation Report to help illustrate the impact of FOCUS Toronto – good or not so good – on individual people. This information will be presented by the Evaluation Team in a way that maintains your anonymity.

Are there risks for participating in the evaluation?

- Your participation in the study will not impact your access to services or your experience with services.
- In completing the storybook, you will be asked to describe experiences and feelings that may be uncomfortable to remember or share. The staff person who referred you to the evaluation is available to debrief with you should you wish this support.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU

In this section you are asked to tell us a bit about yourself by filling in the blanks to complete the sentences. Feel free to leave any spaces blank that you do not wish to complete. A reminder, your information is confidential - only the Evaluation Team will see your information.

1. My age is _____.
2. I have lived in Toronto since _____. (year)
3. The neighbourhood I live in is _____. (or intersections if you do not know)
4. The gender I identify with is _____ and my pronouns are _____.
5. I identify as First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit. Yes _____
No _____
6. I was born in _____.
7. My ethnic or cultural background is _____.
8. The race I identify with is _____.
9. I was involved with FOCUS Toronto in _____.
(month/year)
10. I received support from these agencies (list names of agencies below):

PLEASE SHARE YOUR FOCUS TORONTO STORY

Below, please use your own words to share your FOCUS Toronto story.

**A. Your Life Before FOCUS
Toronto**

**In this section, describe your life right before you got connected to FOCUS
Toronto supports/services.**

In the box, describe with words or by drawing what was happening in your life before you became involved with the FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables? For example:

- What were you experiencing?
- How were you feeling?
- Where were you living?
- Who was with you?
- Who was helping you?

How did you first get connected to the FOCUS Toronto Situation Tables? Describe how you learned about the Situation Tables, how you were contacted, what you were offered, how you were treated, etc.

B. Your FOCUS Toronto Experience

In this section, describe your experience with one or two of the agencies that supported you with your situation.

Service/Support

#1

Describe the first service/support that you got connected to. Please provide as much information as you can.

How did the service/support help you with what was going on in your life at the time or with how you were feeling at the time?

How did you feel after getting connected to this service/support? Please use as many words as you can and add a picture to help describe your

Service/Support #2

Describe another service/support that you got connected to. Please provide as much information as you can.

How did the service/support help you with what was going on in your life at the time or with how you were feeling at the time?

How did you feel after getting connected to this service/support? Please use as many words as you can and add a picture to help describe your

Your Life After FOCUS Toronto

In this section, describe your life since being involved with the agencies that supported you with your situation.

Draw
and/or
describe
your life
after being
supported
by FOCUS
Toronto.
For
example,
what has
changed or
what is
different
and how?

Describe
how you
are feeling
since being
supported
by FOCUS
Toronto.
Use as
many
words or
picture as
you need
to help us
understand

Would you recommend other people you know to the person, people or organizations you were connected or supported by?

Yes, I would because

No, I would not because

Please describe the impact that the FOCUS Toronto connections/supports/services have had on you and the people around you?

Impact on me

Impact on my family, friends and community

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us to improve the supports and services offered by FOCUS Toronto for people experiencing situations like you?

THANK YOU!

Appendix D: Client Impact Stories

Thirteen storybooks were collected from FOCUS Toronto clients. To help bring the client voice to the evaluation, this table has been prepared. It summarizes each client's background and highlights some of the quotes shared through the storybooks.

	BACKGROUND	VERBATIM IMPACT STORIES
1	- Involved in FOCUS June/July 2024 through TPS - Abusive relationship, homeless, racism, sick child - Connected to housing, Victim Services, resources for kids, can afford groceries and diapers "no longer in the shelter but require help with housing still."	"X and X from housing and victim services were the only people who genuinely helped me and checked on me." "felt less alone, felt there was hope for us." "X from housing was to help with the application but he did not do it...he promised to find apartments for us and never did..."
2	- Involved in FOCUS May 2024 through TPS - Domestic violence - Connected to Shelter, Housing and Ontario Works "Happy came to know about all resources that can assist it gave me confidence."	"it's safer than being with my husband, there is no one there to fight me. When you are around those people you get traumatized. It gives me peace of mind to be on my own." "FOCUS is good when people are in trouble as this is a reliable resource."
3	- Involved in FOCUS December 2023 through school - Difficulties with son's academic behavior and felt along - Connected by FOCUS first to school support worker from Toronto District School Board, STRIDES Toronto, bereavement counselling "Gave me more confidence in letting me know that I was not alone, and that there are supports available to me"	"More comfortable advocating for my son, feeling more inclusive, my son is more comfortable going to school...showing a positive attitude towards his goals." "It helps parents to get to know the available supports out there..."
4	- Involved in FOCUS March 2024 through TPS - House fire causing homelessness and trauma to mother and 2 children - Connected to Rexdale Community Centre for clothing, COSTI for counselling, ODSP, Red Cross for shelter, City of Toronto housing	"I know I have lost everything and may never fully regain it all. However, the counselling support from COSTI helped me feel relieved and understood. Being able to speak my language made me feel safe and heard."
5	- Involved in FOCUS October 2024 through community agency - Issues with settlement, job security, could not support family - Connected to Delta Family, Rexdale Community Hub, Food Bank "The community organization that was supporting me...alone could not assist, so they referred our family to the table for more supports."	"Since being supported by FOCUS Toronto, I feel a profound sense of empowerment and relief. The guidance and resources provided have lifted a heavy burden from my shoulders, replacing stress and uncertainty with stability and clarity. I feel more confident in my ability to navigate challenges and make informed choices. The support has given me a sense of belonging and reassurance, knowing I'm not alone in my journey. This has instilled hope for the future, as I now see new opportunities and pathways that were once unclear. Overall, I feel inspired and motivated to make the most of the tools and mentorship I've received. This support has truly been transformative, allowing me to feel grounded, capable and optimistic."
6	- Involved in FOCUS October 2024 through TPS - Abusive relationship, domestic violence, mental distress	"As a newcomer single mom, everything is difficult for me in a new environment, new culture, and situations. I had to worry about tons of stuff as I was raising my kids

	- Connected to Housing Help Center, ACSA (food) TNO, Ontario Works "There are lots of people struggling to get by and survive. They value people's struggles and provide services to help them with their difficult situations and improve community resiliency and wellbeing."	which was tough. After getting involved with some agencies that have supported me a lot.... These services helped me through pieces of training, adapting to the language and culture, so I can gain experience and enrich my skills further. So now I can be prepared for the working environment.
7	- Involved in FOCUS August 2023 via TPS - Verbal and physical abuse; single mom, children with mental health concerns - Connected to victim services, Fred Victor, Elizabeth Hayworth Centre for Women, Housing Help Centre, Legal	"Now I feel that I can make decisions...before I was in prison. I feel peace and freedom in my life."
8	- Involved in FOCUS May 2024 via Victim Services - Homeless "Was quickly connected to the Housing Help Centre...from our first conversation she treated me with kindness and respect, making it clear that I was not alone in this journey. Thanks to her support, I was able to regain a sense of stability and hope for the future."	"I now live in a stable and safe home, which has significantly improved my overall wellbeing. The anxiety and stress that once overshadowed my days have diminished, allowing me to focus on my personal growth. I've created a space that feels like my own – a sanctuary where I can relax, reflect and heal. Overall, the support from FOCUS Toronto has not just changed my circumstances; it has transformed my outlook on life. I now see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. My journey has taught me the power of resilience, and I'm committed to embracing each new day with gratitude and optimism." "Since being supported by FOCUS Toronto, I feel more grounded and clear-minded. It's like moving from a place of uncertainty and feeling weighed down to one of lightness and direction. The support has given me tools and a stronger sense of self, helping me see my path more clearly and feel empowered to take real steps forward. It's like the difference between being in a fog and stepping into sunlight where things around me, and inside me, have come into focus. I feel heard, supported, and I'm no longer navigating things alone."
9	- Involved in FOCUS Toronto in October 2024 - Son involved with criminal activity "At first it was overwhelming with 4 different organizations calling, but in the end whoever was more proactive is who I go with" - Connected to Friends in Toronto Community Services, Legal, counselling, Rexdale Women's Centre, OW	"have people dealing with research...it used to be hard to find resources...resources that you have to pay for are the most expensive..." "I feel heard...everyone has been so helpful...very much on top of what they are doing...good at follow up...reach out and make sure that you are meeting your goals." "Was not helpful for my son...focused on me and taking care of my needs."
10	- Involved in FOCUS Toronto in 2022 via police or school - Daughter involved in police issues - Connected to Heritage Skills Development Centre "The organization we were sent to; they were not judgmental; they listened to my daughter and connected better to her than I did at some points"	"We were at a tipping point and if we had not had FOCUS, she would have been arrested...she has had a bit of recurrence, but it is better now; other family members have noticed the difference." "The organizations that are part of FOCUS are really good." "I would have liked it for me too."
11	- Involved in FOCUS Toronto in November 2024 via school board - Son experienced bullying; autistic; behavioural challenges, suspended from school	"They bring out help you didn't even know." "Nice to have another person who is not judgmental." "I can still rely on X to be on my side...son feels more supported."

	Connected to Autism Team at school board, Fred Victor	
12	- Involved in FOCUS Toronto in 2024 via Case Worker from social services - Mental health, physical disability, adult son has mental health and associated behavioral challenges - Connected to housing services (for her and her son); seeing doctor	"It's 100% helpful. I'm sure there's lots of people suffering like me. I used to think I can't get my own place; it's expensive and I thought I would die suffering...never thought there would be help..."
13	- Involved in FOCUS Toronto in 2022 via mental health agency - Unsafe living conditions; Housing application difficulties, mental health concerns - Received support for housing application and mental health counselling, advocacy, legal, classes at Dixon Hall and through OW	"I felt hopeless and had suicidal thoughts, I wanted to leave town." "I feel empowered and realize that I am not alone...I am in more control...I can see a clear way. I am going to launch a personal development program..." "Advocacy is very powerful...when someone says they are calling on behalf of you they start jumping."

Appendix E: Glossary

A

Acutely Elevated Risk: Any situation impinging on individuals, families, groups or places where circumstances indicate an extremely high probability of the occurrence of harms or victimization.

Age Group: Several people, or things classed together as being of similar age.

D

Discussion Type:

- **Person:** Applied when the immediate discussion involves one individual at acutely elevated risk. Others may be helped because of the intervention
- **Family:** Applied when the risks exhibited are the same for all family members who have been identified to be at acutely elevated risk
- **Neighbourhood:** Applied when the risks identified have broad impacts to a neighbourhood within the community
- **Environment:** Applied when the risks identified have broad impacts to an area or group of people that may not necessarily live in the same neighbourhood but who have all been identified to be at acutely elevated risk due to the environmental circumstances (e.g., school)
- **Dwelling:** Applied when the risks identified have broad applicability/ impacts to several individuals within a dwelling (e.g., apartment building or rooming house) and based on those risks, an acutely elevated risk of harm exists

G

Gender: The range of characteristics pertaining to the behaviours, actions and roles linked to the individual's identification and experience. Within the FOCUS context, the following gender differentiation are used: male, female, trans, and unknown

M

Mobilization Type: How individuals involved in a Situation connected or failed to connect with services

N

Newcomer Status: Eligibility to connect to the appropriate supports related to their status as newcomers in the country. Related to lack of locally recognized professional credentials

R

Risk Category: Characteristics of a situation that contribute to it be an Acutely Elevated Risk (AER)

S

Sectors:

- **Justice:** Promoting and maintaining the safety of individuals and communities by providing law enforcement, criminal prosecution, victims' assistance, and offender management and rehabilitation
- **Housing:** Provision, coordination and regulation of accommodation and housing, including services provided in residential settings
- **Education:** Development, administration and regulation of programs, curricula and other learning opportunities that increase mental, physical and emotional skills, knowledge and abilities of participants

- Health: Delivery of services and supports to address the physical and mental health issues of individuals and ensure the adoption of healthy attitudes, behaviours, environments and policies to improve the health of all
- Community and Social Services: Supports and services that help keep individuals healthy, active, and independent and engaged in inclusive, resilient communities
- Child and Youth Services: Community, custodial programs and/or services provided to improve outcomes for children and youth, successfully transition youth out of custody and/or create opportunities for children and youth at risk
- Services Mobilized: The services mobilized because of the intervention
- Informed of Services: Letting the individual/family know what services are available to reduce risks identified
- Connected to Services: Facilitating the individual's/family's communication with a service provide
- Refused Services: Individual/family refused services recommended by service provider Situation Resolution: The status upon conclusion and the closing of the situation.
- Situation Type: The location, environment, individual, or family of an acutely elevated risk.
- Study Flag: Specific issues and trends in communities that may fall outside the scope of individual risk factors (e.g., cyber-bullying, hoarding, domestic violence, etc.).
- Countering Violent Extremism: Individual is exhibiting behaviours that may make them susceptible for recruitment or pose a potential for violence based on a particular ideology (e.g., political, racial, religious, etc.)
- Homelessness: The situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/ household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/ or racism and discrimination.