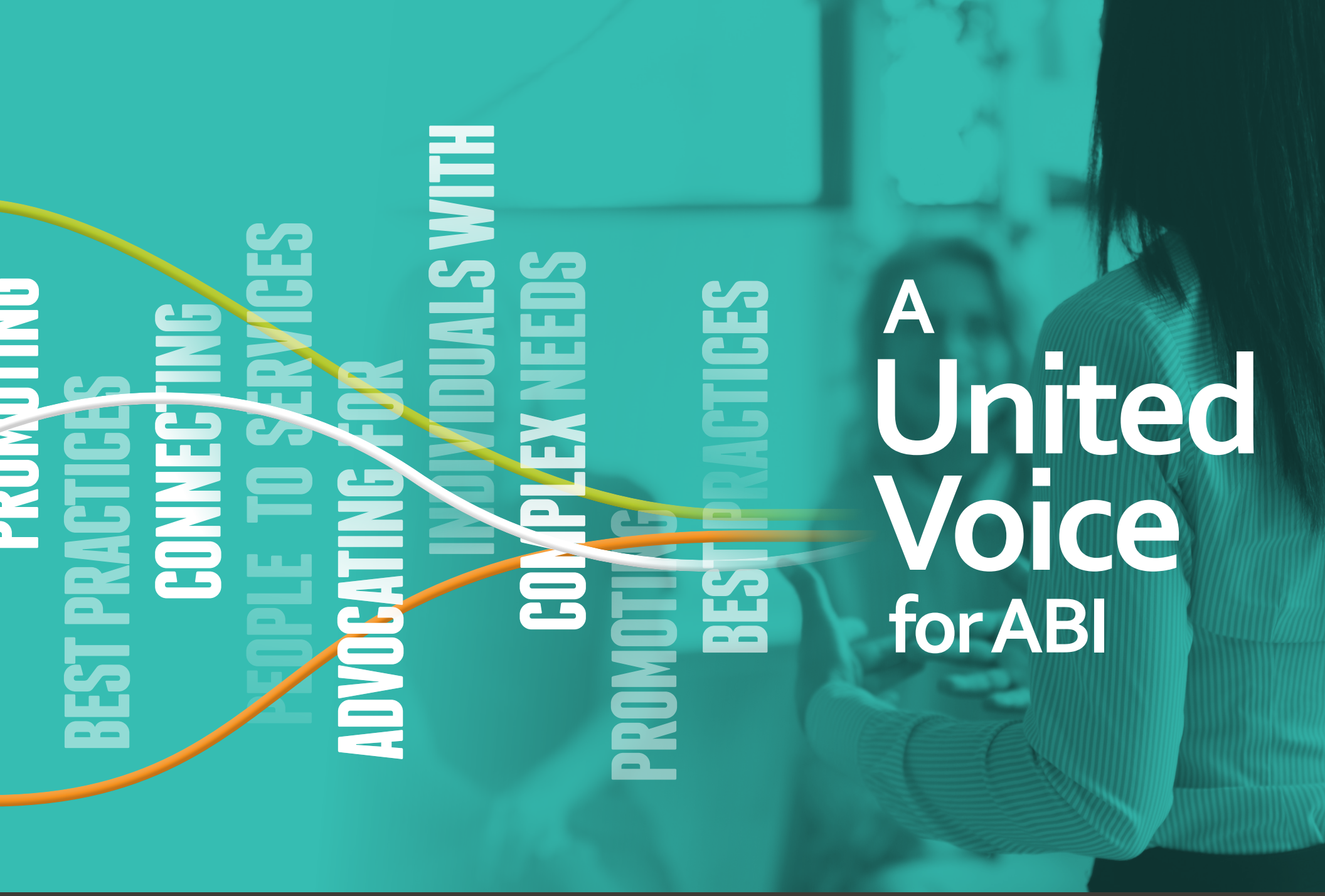


A United Voice for ABI

Toronto abi Network

Annual Report 2020/21

CONNECTING
people
to services

ADVOCATING
for individuals with
complex needs

PROMOTING
best practices

The Toronto ABI Network brings together organizations from across the health care and social services sectors to improve the quality and accessibility of publicly funded services for people with acquired brain injury (ABI).

Network members affirmed the value of this collaborative approach this year, as they created a new strategic plan for the Network. New opportunities and challenges have emerged, and innovative approaches are needed. Virtual care is here to stay: How can we use this model to improve access to services? Health care is shifting to Ontario Health Teams: How do we ensure that people with ABI continue to get the specialized care and support they need?

The need for a united voice has never been stronger. Working together, we can improve the lives of those living with the effects of ABI and their families.

2020/21 INITIATIVES

Supporting seamless navigation

This past year, COVID-19 disrupted health care and community services across the continuum. Throughout this time of change, the Network continued to provide members and other providers with comprehensive navigation support to access inpatient and community-based rehabilitation and support programs for their clients. Support over the past year included:

COVID-19 updates

The Network's bi-monthly COVID-19 report summarizes operational changes across providers, availability of in-person or virtual services and changes to wait times.

Referrals to rehab and support services

Although referrals dropped in the first half of the year due to closures and reduced services, they returned to normal levels later in the year as providers transitioned to virtual care, telephone support and other service delivery approaches.

Support for people with complex needs

The Network responded to more than 75 requests for complex case support and helped members find and coordinate services for individuals with complex needs, such as substance use and mental health issues.

Telephone support

The Network responded to 1,121 telephone requests for information, referrals and navigation support in 2020. More than half of requests came from non-ABI professionals, including family physicians, community care coordinators and social workers.

Resources for individuals with concussion

Working with the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation and people with lived experience, the Network developed an easy-to-use guide and checklist to help people with persistent concussion symptoms find the specialized services they need.

950 referrals (inpatient rehab & community/ outpatient services)

1,121 support calls

75+ calls for complex case support

2020/21 INITIATIVES

Advocating for individuals with ABI

The Network provides a strong, collective voice for individuals with ABI and works to ensure all people with ABI have access to high quality, publicly funded services. Advocacy efforts over the past year included:

Documenting gaps in service

People with complex needs related to ABI, substance use and mental health often face barriers getting the services they need. Working with members and Ontario's provincial ABI navigators, the Network is collecting data on cases of unmet need. The anonymized data is submitted to the Ministry of Health to raise awareness about the gaps in access and the need for cross-sectoral collaboration to better support individuals with complex needs.

Contributing to SafeTO plan

Network members met with municipal planners developing Toronto's new Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan to raise awareness of the prevalence of ABI among the city's vulnerable populations, including those with mental health and substance use issues. Members advocated for supports that recognize the special needs of individuals with ABI in areas such as mental health and housing.

2020/21 INITIATIVES

Increasing ABI knowledge

The Network facilitates best practices and knowledge exchange among its members and provides education to hospital and community organizations on the specialized needs of individuals with ABI. Education activities over the past year included:

Building clinical knowledge

The Network participated in a project of the Neurosurgery Education Outreach Network (NEON) to develop an online educational resource for clinicians across Ontario who care for neurosurgical patients following specialized trauma care. The Network contributed a module profiling ABI rehab, what programs are available and how to access them.

Reaching out to the justice system

Despite the prevalence of traumatic ABI among individuals in the justice system, most staff don't have the knowledge to recognize or manage ABI-related behavioural challenges. This year, the Network presented to a gathering of provincial probation and parole officers on ABI and how the Network can help connect individuals to supportive services.

Sharing knowledge—virtually

The Network successfully transformed its 2020 ABI conference into a virtual event and expanded its reach across Ontario and the country. More than 360 health care professionals and community providers gathered online to share the latest knowledge and best practices in ABI.

Recognizing the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation

The Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (ONF) has wound down its operations after more than two decades of advancing research and knowledge on the prevention of neurotrauma injuries. The Network worked closely with the ONF on many initiatives, including the development of clinical practice guidelines for individuals with ABI and more recently, a provincial report card on access to ABI rehabilitation. A valued partner and ex officio member of the Network, the Foundation made significant contributions to injury prevention and improved quality of life for individuals living with ABI.

A United Voice for ABI

Chair: Hedy Chandler

Community Head Injury Resource Services

Acute Care

Mackenzie Health

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Unity Health Toronto/St. Michael's Hospital

University Health Network/Toronto Western

Inpatient & Day Hospital Rehabilitation

Bridgepoint Active Healthcare/Sinai Health System

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

St. John's Rehab/Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Toronto Rehab/University Health Network

West Park Healthcare Centre

Community Service and Support

Community Head Injury Resource Services

Cota

March of Dimes Canada

Mind Forward Brain Injury Services

PACE Independent Living

Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities

Ex Officio

Brain Injury Association of Durham Region

Brain Injury Society of Toronto

University of Toronto

Toronto ABI Network Staff

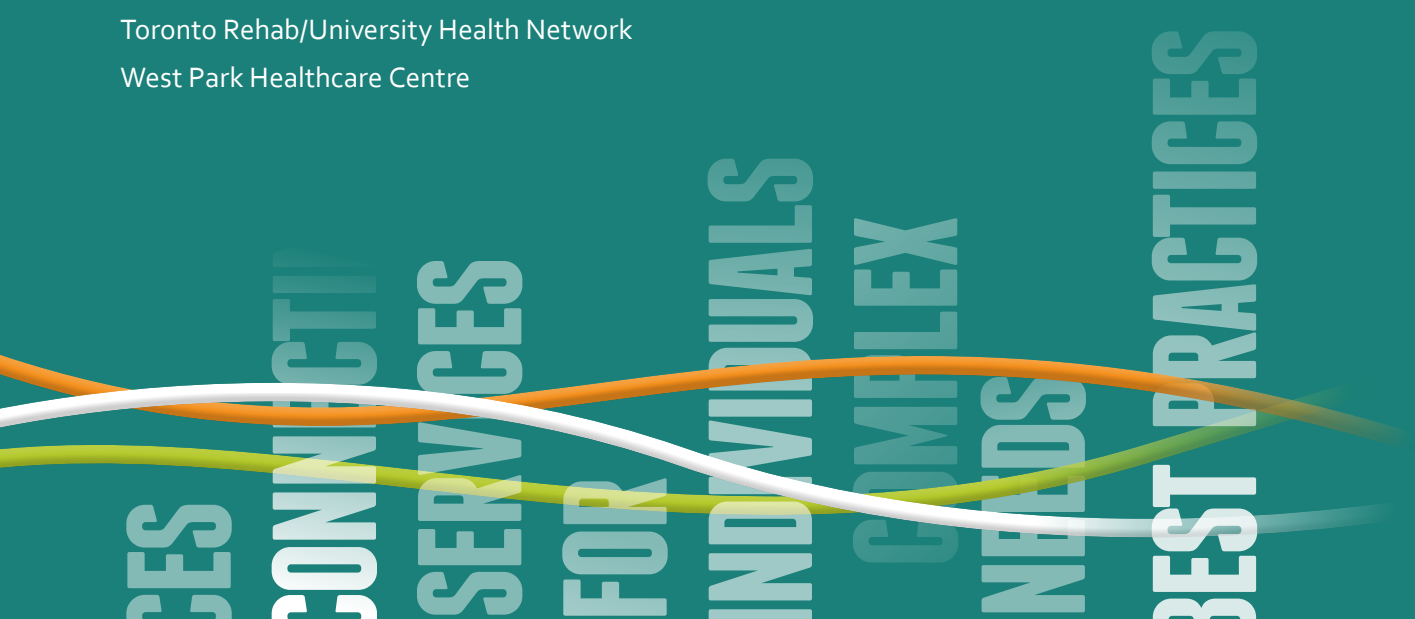
Charissa Levy, Executive Director*

Jennifer Carr, Administrative Assistant

Linda Ngan, Project Manager

Julie Osbelt, Referral Coordinator

* staff shared with the GTA Rehab Network and the Rehabilitative Care Alliance



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