

**New research shows continued impact of economic downturn on the mental health of Calgarians.**

Calgary Counselling Centre seeing increasing amount of distress in recently unemployed clients

**Calgary, AB – May 31, 2016** – New research from Calgary Counselling Centre is showing that the levels of distress of Calgarians is on the rise. This new report shows that the average level of distress for those who are unemployed, seeking counselling and looking for work not only increased from 2014 to 2015 but is continuing to rise significantly through 2016. This is important because it illustrates on a more concrete level the effects of the economic downturn on the community.

Similar to how a doctor measures a patient's vital signs, the Centre routinely measures a client's level of distress or "emotional vital signs". It's through this process that the Centre can see a significant increase in the level of distress that people are feeling at their initial counselling session.

While it is not too surprising that the amount of people attending counselling is increasing or that of those people an increasing amount are reporting being unemployed or looking for work, what is surprising is the amount that it is increasing by. The proportion of people coming in for counselling services who reported being unemployed and looking for work was 11.4% in 2014, 13.3% in 2015 and in the first four months of 2016 alone has gone up to 17.1%.

Additionally, the average level of distress for those who are unemployed, seeking counselling and looking for work has increased critically. Emotional vital signs register any score over 69 as being distressed. The average level of distress for people coming in for counselling increased from 71.9 in 2014 to 73.3 in 2015 and then went up to 74.4 in the first four months of 2016. Comparatively, the average level of distress at the first session for those unemployed and looking for work was consistently higher than other clients overall in both 2015 (82.2) and in the first four months of 2016 (81.1). These new levels of distress are 12% higher than the average first session score for all other clients (72). These 2016 scores are bringing the average level of distress into a troubling range.

"Distress is a barometer for overall wellbeing," Dr. Robbie Babins-Wagner, Chief Executive Officer, Calgary Counselling Centre explains. "These levels are concerning because this level of distress effects individuals and families making it more difficult to cope with everyday activities. For an increasing amount of people the employment situation is getting worse. It is important that we continue to provide support to help the both the individuals directly affected by the downturn as well as the community as a whole."

Calgary Counselling Centre is here to help with no waitlist, a sliding fee scale based on income, and barrier-free access to counselling for all Calgarians.

**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

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Calgary Counselling Centre is the leading research, training and knowledge-based counselling organization in Canada. Since 1962, the Centre has been committed to providing best practices in counselling, training and research to improve the well-being of Calgarians through highly effective counselling based on solid research and practice. Our services are available to anyone regardless of financial status, the Centre is a recognized leader in the treatment of domestic abuse, depression, eating disorders, separation/divorce, trauma and self-esteem. Through its ongoing research and education programs, Calgary Counselling Centre strives to meet the changing needs of our community.