

Mission Moment

Honouring the Volunteers Who Make a Difference Every Day



Volunteers are an important part of the care experience at St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG). Through small acts of kindness, meaningful conversations, and simply being present, they help create moments of comfort, connection, and belonging for our clients, residents, and families each day. Their compassion and generosity make a lasting impact across our organization.

During National Volunteer Week (April 19–25), we proudly celebrated the volunteers who generously share their time and energy throughout SJCG. Across our sites, volunteers welcomed members of the Leadership Team into their spaces and shared a glimpse into the relationships and everyday moments that make their work so meaningful.

The week concluded with our annual Volunteer Services Awards celebration — an afternoon of food, laughter, and connection in honour of the incredible people who give so much to our community. We were especially honoured to recognize Judy Soltys as this year's Sister Dolores Turgeon Volunteer Mission Award recipient for an extraordinary 45 years of dedicated service. The kindness and generosity of our volunteers leave a lasting impact on the people around them, and we are truly thankful for all they do.



Submitted by People & Mission

Drive High-Quality People-Centred Care

Accreditation Canada Survey: Demonstrating Excellence in Care & Practice Across SJCG

St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) Strategic Plan identifies *Drive High-Quality People-Centred Care* as a strategic priority, advanced in part through the organization's voluntary participation in Accreditation Canada. As part of this process, a recent multi-site Accreditation survey provided a rigorous external assessment of SJCG's performance against national standards of quality, safety, and people-centred care. Through direct observation, interviews, and review of organizational practices, the process supported validation of strengths, identified opportunities for continuous improvement, and reinforced SJCG's commitment to safe, reliable, high-quality care.



Conducted across eight SJCG sites, the survey included direct engagement with staff, clients, professional staff, families, volunteers, Board members, and health system and community partners. Surveyors assessed performance across 17 standards spanning governance, leadership, quality and safety, mental health and addictions, rehabilitation, long-term care, community services, and palliative care. The active participation of the Board of Directors was recognized as an important contribution to the process and reflective of SJCG's strong governance commitment to quality and accountability.

Surveyors identified several notable organizational strengths, including the advancement of Indigenous Cultural Safety initiatives, implementation of SJCG's renewed Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Plan, and development of a comprehensive Business Continuity Plan. They also highlighted strong staff engagement and a deeply rooted organizational commitment to quality improvement and people-centred care.

Importantly, the debrief acknowledged the broader realities shaping healthcare delivery across the sector, including increasing service demands and ongoing health human resource pressures. Within this context, surveyors recognized SJCG's continued focus on sustaining high-quality care while adapting to changing community needs and system expectations.

The Accreditation process reinforced the important role that continuous improvement plays in strengthening organizational resilience, accountability, and care experiences. Across programs and services, staff demonstrated professionalism, compassion, and a shared commitment to delivering safe, high-quality, people-centred care.

SJCG is currently awaiting its final accreditation designation from Accreditation Canada, which is expected in the coming weeks.

Integrated Community Response Through the STAR Team Partnership

St. Joseph's Care Group's (SJCG) N'doo'owe Binesi is working in partnership with the City of Thunder Bay through its Superior North EMS division and the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Thunder Bay to support the Superior North Specialized Treatment and Alternate Responders (STAR) team, a collaborative community response to mental health and addictions-related crises. Similar to the integrated partnership approach reflected through the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub model, this work is grounded in a shared commitment across organizations to improving access to timely, culturally safe, and people-centred supports, particularly for those who may not have historically accessed services through traditional care pathways.

The STAR team is a mobile crisis response model designed to support people experiencing mental health and addictions-related crises in the community. Bringing together emergency medical services, mental health supports, and culturally grounded care, the STAR team provides timely, compassionate, and proportionate responses focused on ensuring individuals receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time, and in a manner that upholds dignity and respect during moments of crisis. In doing so, it aims to reduce reliance on emergency departments and police involvement where appropriate.

Within this partnership, SJCG has embedded Nanaandawe'ewin (Traditional Healing Program) staff directly into the STAR team. Two Indigenous Health Associates are based at the Junot Street EMS headquarters and work alongside STAR team members in real time crisis response. Their presence ensures that Indigenous cultural supports are available at the point of care, rather than being accessed only through referral pathways after the fact. These roles are supported through ongoing connection to N'doo'owe Binesi leadership, including Ogichidaa-Kwe Brenda Mason, members of Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin (Elders Council), and access to ceremony and Elder-guided cultural supports, ensuring continuous grounding in Indigenous knowledge and cultural safety.

SJCG's Mikinaak Gagiigidowin (Indigenous Cultural Safety & Education) program supported Superior North EMS and CMHA Thunder Bay staff involved in the STAR team through Indigenous cultural safety education, including Repairing the Sacred Circle (RSC) training delivered at the outset of the partnership and during a recent team-building session. This shared learning helps support relational approaches to care within the day-to-day work of the team.

Through N'doo'owe Binesi, SJCG's contribution is focused on embedding Indigenous Health Associates directly within frontline crisis response, strengthening cultural safety, trust, and connection to ongoing supports such as Safe Sobering and Withdrawal Management through Mino Ginawenjigewin. This approach reflects a commitment to meeting people where they are, and ensuring that care is accessible in moments when it is most needed.

Nurture Our People

From Learning to Impact: Research & Evaluation Month Builds Capacity Across SJCG



Throughout April, St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) celebrated Research & Evaluation Month, reinforcing our commitment to developing academic and research capabilities that support excellence in client care. Led by the Centre for Applied Health Research (CAHR), the month-long initiative aligned directly with the Strategic Priority to *Nurture Our People* – specifically our commitment to strengthen research capacity across the organization.

Building on the momentum of February's Research Showcase, Research & Evaluation Month provided staff with practical, accessible learning opportunities designed to strengthen confidence and capability through research and evaluation activities that inform quality improvement, decision-making, and client care.

Delivered through a four-week learning series featured on SJCG's staff intranet, the initiative focused on making research and evaluation approachable, relevant, and applicable to day-to-day work across programs and services. The series also supported a key CAHR objective: building research and evaluation capacity throughout SJCG. Weekly learning topics included:

- *Research Versus Evaluation: What's the Difference and Why It Matters*
- *Researching Enough Participants: Why Participation Matters and How to Increase Responses for Your Next Survey or Focus Group*
- *Creating Better Surveys: How to Write Effective Questions for Decision-Making, Evaluation, and Research at SJCG*
- *Current Research at SJCG: From Compassion to CAPS, Learn How Current Research at SJCG Can Drive Improvements in Care*

These learning opportunities highlighted how research and evaluation contribute directly to evidence-informed practice, improved client outcomes, and continuous quality improvement across the organization.

In alignment with Research Month activities, CAHR also released its [2025 Annual Report](#), showcasing the breadth of research, evaluation, and knowledge translation activities underway across SJCG and reinforcing the organization's growing leadership in applied health research.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate SJCG's continued investment in fostering a culture of inquiry, learning, and innovation, strengthening the skills of our people while advancing excellence in care for the clients and communities we serve.

Lead and Enhance Regional Specialized Care

Advancing the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program

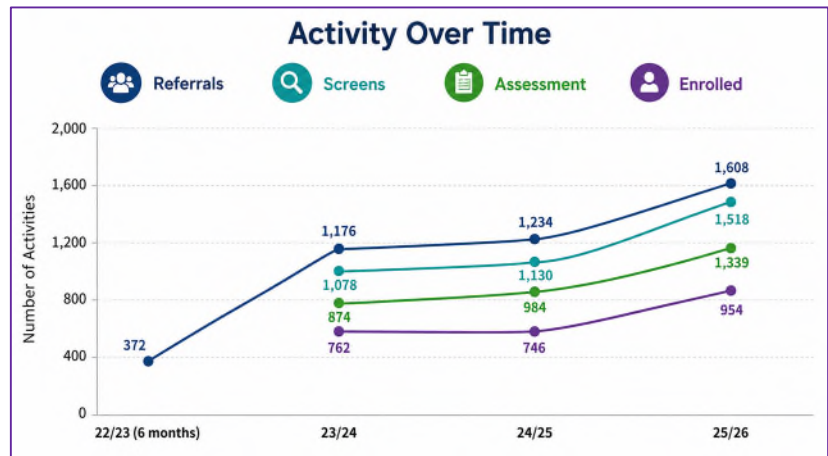
As the Northwest Network Lead Organization (NLO) for the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) Program, St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) continues to play a leadership role in advancing access to timely, evidence-based mental health services across Northwestern Ontario. This work aligns with the Ontario Government's *Roadmap to Wellness* and supports SJCG's strategic priority to *Lead & Enhance Regional Specialized Care* by leading

transformative system change in mental health and addictions services and coordinating regional programs that bring equitable specialized care closer to home.

Service Access & System Capacity

Since launch, annual referral, screening, assessment, and enrolment volumes have reflected both growing awareness of the program and sustained demand for timely mental health supports across the region.

Approximately 60% of clients accessed low-intensity interventions, including BounceBack, Clinician-Assisted Bibliotherapy, and internet-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT). These service options support a stepped-care model that increases access, reduces barriers to care, and optimizes clinical resources across the region.



The screening process supports appropriate care matching and navigation to alternate community services when OSP is not the best fit, helping ensure clients receive the right care at the right time. Screening and assessment volumes may be impacted by challenges reaching individuals following referral.

Regional Integration & Equitable Access

Regional engagement activities, including provider education sessions, community outreach, health fairs, and collaboration with primary care and community partners, have strengthened awareness and integration of OSP services throughout Northwestern Ontario. As a result, referrals continue to increase, particularly from outside Thunder Bay.

This growth reflects ongoing progress toward coordinated regional service delivery and improved access to specialized mental health services closer to home. In response, enhancements to Intake services were implemented to strengthen navigation supports and improve coordination of care pathways across the region.

SJCG continues to perform strongly relative to provincial benchmarks, maintaining wait times below the provincial median, while clients generally receive intake appointments within 14 days of referral.

Quality, Outcomes & Evidence-Based Care

OSP continues to utilize validated measurement-based care tools to monitor client symptoms, functioning, and treatment progress over time. This evidence-informed approach supports responsive care planning, strengthens client engagement, and contributes to consistently positive clinical outcomes across the NLO and its service delivery partners.

Advancing Inclusive & Culturally Safe Care

Several initiatives were advanced this year to strengthen equitable and culturally responsive access to care across the region.

A dedicated Francophone service pathway was established through partnership with another Network Lead Organization (NLO), improving coordinated access for French-speaking clients. A French referral form is now

available through the access portal, and French-language materials have been added to the SJCG OSP landing page. Active Offer training completion among OSP staff currently sits at 50%, with a target of full completion by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year.

To further strengthen culturally safe care for Indigenous communities, all Northwest NLO staff, including service delivery partner therapists, completed Indigenous Cultural Safety training through the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (IPHCC). In collaboration with N'doo'owe Binesi and Human Resources, job descriptions were updated to support recruitment and retention of Indigenous clinicians. The NLO also continues to prioritize access to OSP services through Indigenous service delivery partners, supporting more equitable and community-connected care across Northwestern Ontario.