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The Alex 2019-2020 Annual Report

INCREASING ACCESS TO CARE

Message from the CEO

Thank you for joining us to learn more about our 2019-2020 year. Usually at this time of year, I am not only reflecting on the great work done by our team here at The Alex, but also excitedly looking toward the future. This year feels a little bit different. Of course, we have some wonderful forward-thinking plans, but, as we all know, the future seems more unsure than ever. How long will we be working within this pandemic? What world awaits us on the other side? How will our work fundamentally change – and will it be for the better? There are so many unknowns facing all of us, and that can feel overwhelming. But what gives me comfort is knowing that this dedicated, caring team is well positioned to adapt, innovate and lead through this crisis. I know this because I have seen the results. We have watched our world turn on its head and have risen to meet the challenge.

While COVID-19 began largely outside of our fiscal year end, we could not wait another year to share this work. You will see our pandemic response inserted in this report and we are grateful for the opportunity to share it with you.

Message from the Board Chair

The Board of Directors is proud to stand with our staff at The Alex and support an organization that is constantly shifting, adapting, and fearlessly working towards health and wellness equity and inclusion for all Calgarians.

When called upon, The Alex responds. Each of our over 400 team members is committed to walking with our community members from challenge to change. Their efforts make immense differences in peoples' lives and we thank them all for being part of The Alex family.

Reflecting on where we find ourselves moving forward, it's clearer now more than ever that big change doesn't

The initiatives we're spotlighting in this year's annual report highlight The Alex's focus on removing barriers to care by creating accessible supports and being in the right place at the right time for our community. Increasing access to care is a priority for all of our programs at The Alex, but is demonstrated this year by the launch of our new Community Health Bus which brings care to community partners and schools, our Rapid Access Addiction Medicine program which increases access to addiction resources, and our increased access to mental health supports for youth through our ACCESS Open Minds partnership.

As you read this report, you are seeing the foundations laid for our priorities around increased medical and social integration, furthering our wellness initiatives and our commitment to improving the quality of life for those who walk through our doors. Thank you for being part of our journey.

- Joy Bowen-Eyre, CEO

happen in a vacuum, and no one can do this work alone. So we look to our supporters – government partners, corporate friends, foundations and individual donors – and thank them for believing in the work we do, and for helping us move forward.

This report is a document of where we have been, and where we are going, with a reflection on how we have adapted to a global shift in public health, and a demonstration of our commitment to be there, be strong, and be an organization you trust. Thank you for being our partner.

- Doug Page, Board Chair

Spotlight on...Mobile Health

710

teens visited our
Youth Health Bus
in 2019/2020

3311

children received
dental education

Our fleet of mobile health buses put us on the map in 2001, and have since been a stalwart of our programming, demonstrating the power of accessible, responsive health care mixed with strong social supports. The Community and Youth Health Buses act as mini community health centres, bringing wraparound care to those who may find challenges accessing or navigating the traditional health care system, and our Dental Health Bus targets families without access to dental benefits, helping children reclaim their bright smiles.

This year, with thanks to TELUS Health, the oldest member of our fleet got a new lease on life in December with the re-launch of our Community Health Bus. The Community Health Bus serves in areas of high need, providing a safe, welcoming opportunity to make the first step to wellness for those without a family doctor.

The brand-new retrofitted RV stocked with medical supplies, as well as a friendly doctor, nurse and social support resource specialist, has allowed us to expand our support into community centres, partner agencies, and local high schools, supplementing the schedule of the Youth Health Bus.

The Youth Health Bus, in partnership with the Calgary Board of Education, saw over 700 unique youth last year and has continued to serve high schools across the city with judgment-free, accessible support for teens who need someone to talk to about their physical, sexual and mental health needs.

Twinkle's Story

Twinkle was very nervous her first time visiting The Alex Youth Health Bus as a high school student. She didn't know exactly what she needed, but she knew she needed help. Going to any doctor was nerve-wracking for Twinkle, but she liked that the bus was an RV built into a doctor's office and that it was parked right outside her school. She mustered up the courage to give it a try.

The staff on the bus instantly made her feel more comfortable. They were friendly but not invasive, took the time to listen, and talked her through everything. All her nervousness disappeared.

During this time, Twinkle was homeless, living on the streets and just trying to get by.

"I was just always in survival mode. You're waiting for the next thing to happen again and again. I didn't know how to pay bills, do taxes, or even take care of myself."

Twinkle quickly realized that though she could access medical care from the staff on the Youth Health Bus, they were eager to support with so much more.

"They helped with things that regular doctors don't usually help with – things like housing, food needs, everything. It's really nice."

With the help of The Alex Youth Health Bus, Twinkle has become the successful young person she knew she could be. She's currently working at TELUS, she's been exercising, eating healthy, and thinking about going back to school for nursing.

"I've never been in such a calm, stable space in my life. It's almost like weird to me. The Alex changed my life. I think without them I wouldn't have been able to finish school or be where I am today without their support."

Spotlight on...Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM)

Thanks to funding provided by the Government of Canada and Alberta Health Services, The Alex is now providing Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) services in addition to its existing comprehensive health, housing and social programs.

RAAM is intended to fill a void in the addiction treatment system by providing immediate access to evidence-based addiction care. The program is low-barrier, meaning anyone with a substance use disorder, regardless of household income, can access the service. When an individual walks in for their initial intake appointment, they are

immediately met with an intake specialist, and often begin their program that very same day. RAAM is person-centred, and the team will work with them to go over a wide range of options and co-develop a treatment plan. That plan includes short-term, time-limited case management support, working to identify goals, and providing the support to reach them. Having RAAM as part of our primary care network allows for fast, safe, effective treatment of addiction, in a way that sets the individual up for success by providing medically assisted support as well as a full scope of mental health supports.

John's* story

What is the best birthday gift you have received? For John* it was a gift he gave to himself – walking into the RAAM clinic on his 45th birthday to ask for help with his alcohol addiction. A professional, with a family, mortgage and all the rest, John had been hiding his addiction, and struggling with self-perception and intense feelings of shame. Like many people, John was trying to manage on his own, and would find himself in a pattern of returning to alcohol and feeling like he failed himself and his family.

When he walked into RAAM, our team was able to see him immediately, prescribe medication to help with his current withdrawal symptoms, and to begin a plan to move him out of the cycle of relapse and onto a sustainable path of healing. John has now been the first graduate of our program, and is back on track with his job, his family and his life.

It is the combination of quick access, and a collaboration from medical and social teams that makes RAAM so successful.

“Addiction should be better integrated into primary care. It is a chronic disease just like diabetes or heart disease.” said Tracy Dafoe of our RAAM clinic. “Addiction is not a mystery, it is caused by genetic predisposition, trauma and other factors. When we demystify the addiction, we can stop looking at it as a ‘character defect’ and see and treat the whole person.”

*Name changed to protect privacy

Spotlight on...Access Open Minds (AOM)

ACCESS Open Minds (AOM) is a pan-Canadian network that is improving youth mental health services and understanding their impact in diverse communities from coast to coast to coast. This year, with funding support by The City of Calgary, The Alex Youth Health Centre became the 16th ACCESS Open Minds sites to operate in Canada.

Being invited to join this network allows us to build on local strengths to improve mental health services for youth. Collectively, each site uses standardized service and evaluation components to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community.

The AOM model ensures youth get help as soon as possible, through walk-in, phone or email, and are fully supported and connected to the right services. The youth and their families or caregivers are engaged in the design of their service plan and are partners in their care. With continuous evaluation, we are best able to evaluate and respond to any needed changes.

Not all youth who visit the YHC experience poor quality of life, but many do. And The Alex can help. For youth at The Alex, the ability to connect with the AOM team has made significant changes in their trajectory. After receiving

counseling through our Access Open Minds program, quality of life improved significantly in the areas of family relationships, living arrangements, social relationships, and overall quality of life among those with low scores at intake.

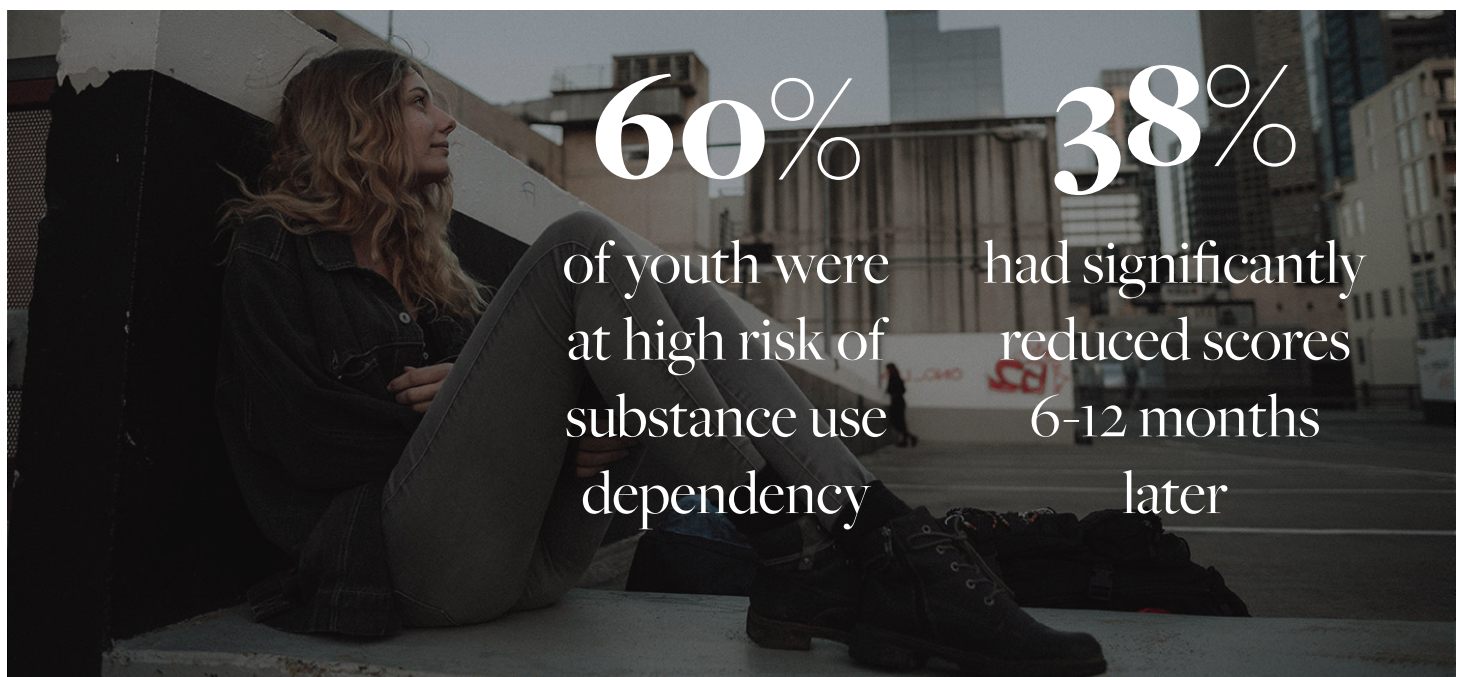
In 2019-20, 84% of youth served by the YHC presented with some level of psychological distress, with 42% presenting with moderate to high levels of distress, indicating very poor mental health.*

Among the youth who received counseling, youth outcomes improved, with emotional dysregulation problems, such as impulsivity and aggression, declining significantly.

AOM has also been a significant factor in supporting youth at high-risk for substance-use dependency. Over 60% of youth coming to the YHC were at moderate to high risk of a substance abuse disorder.** Six to 12 months later, among those for whom data were available, 38% of those at risk had significantly reduced risk scores, and none of those at low risk to begin with were worse off at follow up.

**as measured by the OQ-10.*

*** as measured by the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN) Short Screener Substance Disorder Subscale.*



the
alex

React Reframe Respond

Our first three months*
responding to COVID-19



This report shines a spotlight on the incredible work The Alex has achieved over the past few months. It is a testament not only to the work we do, but the work *you* have done to provide critical support during this time, as funders, donors, community partners and friends.

So thank you for being a part of The Alex family. We deeply appreciate your support of our organization and the vulnerable people we serve, particularly at this time. And thank you for supporting our team; the people who are delivering on our promise to support vulnerable Calgarians; the people who provide health, housing and social supports to our neighbours, many whom would not have anywhere else to turn.

You make this possible.

- Joy Bowen-Eyre, CEO

Meet Alex, our friendly monkey who shows us how to keep safe during COVID-19.

Together we have supported over **5000** Calgarians from April to June. And we aren't done yet.

*Social Dispatch data from March 15 - June 15. Community Food Centre data from April 1 - June 30. ASIS data from April 6 - June 14

Special Insert: Alex COVID Response

Community Health Centre

Adjust, respond, then adjust some more.

As COVID-19 reached Calgary, The Alex team worked tirelessly to adapt and reorganize our entire operation to create new ways of supporting our community. Within a matter of days, we tapped into the commitment and ingenuity of our staff to find solutions despite creating needed physical distance between us.

Not one day was lost. We worked to be as responsive and nimble as we've ever been, to ensure continuity of care for our community. We realigned and integrated our programs and services to meet the most pressing needs of the thousands of people we serve.

Collaborating with local health and emergency authorities and our sector colleagues on our response, we continued to follow the advice of official public health authorities. During the first few weeks we maintained a direct connection with the Medical Officer of Health to increase our screening and implement new protocols on an almost daily basis.

Across the social-service sector, we have been required to adapt and ensure that no one is left behind or falls through the cracks during this crisis.

We understood that physical distancing was necessary but knew that true social distance would be a serious blow for our already vulnerable community. Every decision we made has considered this dichotomy: Keep our staff and community safe while maintaining connection and care.

While we ceased group programming, we rolled out our new Social Dispatch Centre which involved the re-deployment of our food, social and wellness staff members. Our medical teams separated into two and rotated, to ensure we would have a staffing component if one team had to self-isolate.

We closed our Youth and Housing wings to reduce the number of spaces that needed cleaning, heightened our protocols for entry, and worked overtime to ensure our spaces were continuously disinfected.

At the heart of our COVID-19 response was our Community Health Centre. With all health clinics being centralized into this “command centre” we continued to accept in-person medical appointments for current Alex clients while following all screening and masking protocols. In addition to adding weekend hours, our medical clinics delivered more appointments and saw more unique patients than in previous years, with a substantially higher ratio of virtual/telephone appointments to in-person visits.

By continuing with this model of care throughout the pandemic, we never wavered on our commitment to those who needed us.

While this report is a reflection of a moment in time, it captures the spirit of innovation, adaptation and the raw get-it-done attitude of The Alex. We also know this is far from over. There is no doubt COVID-19 is a medical crisis, but it is also an economic crisis, and will continue to be a mental health crisis as we slowly recover.

We are always keeping one eye on the future in these most uncertain of times, to understand and properly prepare for how the need for our services is going to grow.



Social Dispatch

“You’ve reached The Alex - how can we help you?”

It’s been nothing short of an incredibly emotional, intense time for our teams. **We truly know the impact of social isolation and how important having a strong community is, especially for those who are most vulnerable to experiencing poverty, homelessness, or mental health issues.**

So as we move through this collective unknown, the team at The Alex has done what we do best – be nimble, accessible, and kind. Our Social Dispatch Centre (a team of cross-program social workers, youth workers, justice navigators, client resource specialists, case managers, food educators and more) began managing a bank of phones (at a safe 2 metres from each other), providing critical lifelines to our community.

Any current Alex client (both patients and participants in any of our programs) was invited to call in to connect with a friendly voice on the other end of the line. Our team was quickly able to triage each call to best understand what people need and how to best support them. Those feeling a financial pinch were directed to funding resources, or encouraged to register for our remote tax clinics, to make sure they received the benefits they were entitled to.

We sent clients grocery gift cards to support their shopping if they could access a supermarket, or we prepared and delivered food hampers with recipes (think Hello Fresh) if shopping wasn’t an option. Our team organized heaps of basic needs items, bringing diapers, formula, toilet paper and hand sanitizer to the doorsteps of families quarantined and unable to get their own items.

Our Social Dispatch team directed and supported over 6,000 requests for mental health and addiction supports, parenting questions, justice issues, educational resources, and financial resources, using our network of collaborative agencies and expertise.

Chelsea’s Story

“A young 23 year old mum had four small children in her home, all with suspected COVID-19, based on a remote assessment completed by our physicians. I was able to connect with her and asked what essentials she needed for her family of six, since they could not leave the house for 14 days. We were able to use \$75 worth of gift cards and go shopping for the family, gathering essentials like flats of soup, eggs, apples, bananas and Children’s Tylenol.

Upon arriving at the house, we took all of the groceries out and left them on their front porch, and called them to let them know the items had been left. We waited in the vehicle ensuring they got everything inside before leaving. I can’t think of a more tremendous gift than being able to provide a family in need with essentials, especially when their entire household was so ill and unable to leave the house. Having sick tiny humans is treacherous in any event, let alone a pandemic. The work that we do is invaluable to the community, especially during these trying and uncertain times.”

- Chelsea, Youth Support Worker

Assisted Self-Isolation Site

How do you self-isolate when you don't have a home?

The Alex has been a key player in a system-wide response to **providing a safe, medically supported space for those experiencing homelessness.**

The Assisted Self-Isolation Site (ASIS) is a collaboration between The Alex, Alberta Health Services, Calgary Homeless Foundation, HomeSpace, and CUPS. Repurposing a vacant hotel in the city's northeast, ASIS provides safe, comfortable rooms for those who either have tested positive, are waiting for test results, have symptoms or have come into contact with a known case and don't have a home where they can properly

isolate. The staff provide not only medical support, but also mental health and addiction resources.

Through tremendous efforts of the front-line teams, ASIS opened within one week of receiving funding from the Government of Alberta. We immediately saw an incredible collaboration unfold across the city, as shelters and hospitals referred into the program.

To date we have protected over 220 Calgarians experiencing homelessness from potentially spreading the virus in our community.

Violet's Story

The note, written in beautiful cursive, and decorated with flowers, peace signs and red crosses, read "I love all my Front Liners. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made for us!" Violet had taped it to the door of her room at the Assisted Self-Isolation Site (ASIS) as she was being discharged, as a way of showing her appreciation for the team that had helped her through her two weeks at the hotel.

Violet is one of the many Calgarians experiencing homelessness who entered ASIS so she could have a safe space to self-isolate. She had been traced as a close contact of someone who had contracted COVID-19.

During her time spent at ASIS, the teams worked to ensure she would be supported after her two-week isolation. Each resident receives a customized care plan to provide on-going supports. Violet was provided with a phone and SIM card, and will be moving to a housing facility being operated by Alpha House.

"Having somewhere to go, you know, having a home to go to. Wow. To go home. To cook supper. To cook my own meals. To sleep in my own bed. Some people take it for granted. I implore them not to take it for granted because it can all be taken away in the blink of an eye. But now, to have it given back – it's surreal – it's a glorious gift," Violet said. "This is a godsend – this is a new start."

"It's been pretty amazing, actually - a well-needed rest. They feed you quite nicely. It was good to put on weight too. The people are really personable here. The one-on-ones were awesome – nurse Rachel is wonderful. I have only been here for a short period of time, but I've done so much soul searching – being healthier and thinking healthier."

Community Food Centre (CFC)

Growing, cooking and sharing during COVID-19.

As the world closed its doors in late March, we at The Alex Community Food Centre had to look inward and ask ourselves “What does a community resource like the CFC look like without the bustling energy of our weekly meals, the laughter of kids in our cooking classes, and the welcoming smiles of our volunteers greeting people at the doors? **How do we deliver the comforts and kindness of our programs during a time of physical distancing?**”

Like everyone, we adapted. In the earliest weeks of the crisis, we cast our sights across the broader Alex community. First, we focused on our most vulnerable clients, those with complex medical, mental health and addiction needs. Our kitchen staff began preparing and delivering over 4,500 hot meals to clients to ensure they stayed comfortably in their homes.

As we moved away from an emergency response and into the longer-term, the CFC kitchen pivoted yet again to ensure we were prepared to respond to increased requests for support. With the help from our funders and supporters, we began to offer financial supports for food, shopping services, grocery kits, and meal kits.

The kitchen stayed busy making delicious, healthy, reheatable frozen meals, ready to be safely delivered to those who are unable to prepare food at home. Meal hampers were delivered to people able to cook independently with some support, and grocery cards were given to community members who could go shopping and cook what works best for their families.

As the weather warmed, we looked at ways we could use our large outdoor garden to safely bring people together and recapture the spirit of community. Our first affordable produce market kicked off in early May, ensuring physical distancing, but celebrating social togetherness. The market is providing a spark of community spirit in the Greater Forest Lawn area. Every Wednesday Fresh Routes brings a truck filled with fresh fruits and veggies, and sets up shop. Families can leave with bags overflowing with zucchini, broccoli, carrots, apples, grapes, potatoes and more – a value of \$50 for just \$25.

Throughout the morning the staff are busy preparing a delicious take-home meal, given for free to every attendee. A generous volunteer has sewn beautiful handmade masks, which are given out to anyone who wants one. Community resources and opportunities to sign up for programs are also available. The market is a welcome respite for many who have been struggling to stay connected to their community, or to access healthy food through the pandemic.

While we can't yet all sit together and share a meal, we can share a friendly nod to a neighbour. We can share ideas for recipes for the bounty of food we are taking home, and we can remember that we will get through this together, and come out the other side a stronger community for this shared experience.

“I felt so supported and cared for and it honestly made such a big difference these days. The box was amazing, and all of those things included were so helpful.”



Youth Health Centre

Ensuring vulnerable youth don't fall through the cracks.

Our Youth Health Centre drop-in space operates on the maxim "If you feed them, they will come". We've always ensured that a hot, healthy meal is available to entice youth who may otherwise be scared or shy, to visit our team of youth support specialists. Once we have them in the door, **our staff welcome youth through non-judgmental compassion. We walk with them in the process of reclaiming their lives, working through challenges and cultivating healthy and successful futures.**

Of course, once our society closed its doors in late March, so did our drop-in space. Integrating our Youth Workers with our Social Dispatch team allowed them to reach out, check in, and be available through phone, email and video when our youth needed it most.

Our team supported clients in many ways - through conversations about addiction, providing baby supplies, making referrals to the food bank, giving out grocery gift cards, hampers and meals, helping find housing, navigating the justice system, and providing a listening ear - all things that didn't stop being needed because of COVID-19, or perhaps were needed even more.

Our medical and counseling services remained open and available throughout the pandemic. While our Youth Health Bus missed the last few months of high school visits, we stayed in touch with our teenage community members and made sure they knew we were still here for them.

Kiera's Story

With the closure of schools, our Youth Health Bus outreach was paused. However, the physicians and social support staff that work on the buses continued to provide care telephonically, virtually, and in-person by appointment at The Alex during COVID-19.

A 19 year old youth who had previously been accessing mental and physical health care on the Youth Health Bus was struggling with heightened anxiety and challenges related to an eating disorder. We'll call her Kiera. Her physician, Dr. Deb, wanted Kiera to visit the clinic in person but was having a hard time reaching her by phone. When Dr. Deb finally managed to connect with her, Kiera said she didn't feel safe leaving the house. Dr. Deb was

quite concerned about Kiera's health and wellbeing, so she requested that one of our client resource specialists, Lyndon, deliver a healthy food hamper, her medication, and some basic needs supplies to her home.

When Lyndon dropped off the supplies and made physically-distanced in-person contact with Kiera, he saw that she indeed required support. He described the robust safety protocols implemented at The Alex during COVID-19, and was able to reassure her that it was a safe environment. Kiera then agreed to visit The Alex and saw Dr. Deb who was able to continue the care she needed. Kiera has resumed her treatment and has been back on track over the course of the pandemic.

Seniors Health Centre

Our most at-risk demographic stays safe.

Nestled at the base of low-income seniors' housing in the East Village, The Alex Seniors Health Centre has seen significant changes to the community over the past years. Development has thrived in an area that was once a forgotten part of downtown. Navigating these changes, as positive as they may seem, has been a challenge for our staff and especially the community members, who often find changes to routine difficult.

So of course, the changes that came from the pandemic had a deep effect on the mental health of the seniors we serve. **Many made the trip down to the clinic part of their daily routine - a way to see a friendly face for those who struggle with social isolation.** Having to lock the doors of the clinic was one of the hardest things we've ever had to do.

These necessary changes to the way we support our seniors' health, difficult as they were, have been an integral part of our incredible results. Not one of our over 1,200 at-risk seniors has tested positive for COVID-19 at this time. To be able to say that we were able to protect our most vulnerable population is a true testament to this work.

We continue to provide important social navigation and support to seniors - showing them how to use their phone to order meals, where to get inexpensive groceries in their neighbourhood, and how to send photos of their ailments to our team to look at.

Of course, we hope to be able to open our doors slowly and safely again, knowing that we are a lifeline for more than just physical health. And we're looking forward to the day we stop getting photos of bunions, but rather see them in person once again.

Zero

cases of COVID-19
at our Seniors Health
Centre



See the stories of
The Alex at
www.thealex.ca/video



Special Insert: Alex COVID Response

Housing First Programs

Positive transitions from homelessness during a crisis.

Our four housing programs helped transition 500 individuals out of homelessness last year, using an intensive support system of case managers, physicians, addictions specialists and mental health clinicians.

The path to housing is not always an easy one. The transition from a life of transience to permanence can often mean saying goodbye to existing friendships and “street families” as lifestyle changes mean removing opportunities to slip back into old habits. **Even in the best of times, we see individuals who are struggling with depression, addiction and other severe mental health issues.**

As COVID-19 hit, we worked around the clock to ensure that our housed clients felt safe and supported. Providing meals, books, video games, and art supplies helped keep folks in their homes and reduced stress.

Many of our housed community members have psychiatric disorders including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, so helping them understand the severity of the pandemic was a priority.

Connection is critical during this time. We reached out to ask for computers and smart phones so that our case managers could safely conduct “home visits” and be lifelines for those who were having a difficult time. The generosity of our community was overwhelming, and we are still receiving much-needed technology.

Our Pathways to Housing, HomeBase, Prelude and Abbeydale housing programs saw their own unique challenges. Engaging in creative service provision and cultivating connection in the throes of isolation, empowered us to determinedly break down the barriers created by the pandemic.

By the Numbers

A snapshot of the first 3 months of COVID

6,314 direct outreach connections to individual community members and families.

14,502 fresh, nutritious meals delivered to food-insecure Calgarians.

\$77,000 in grocery cards given for basic needs items.

1,015 unique youth received services through our Social Dispatch team

Alex Program Snapshots

We're very proud of the incredible services we offer to members of our community. Below is a snapshot of some of our other programs and supports.

Community Food Centre

The Alex Community Food Centre (CFC) located in the heart of Forest Lawn, offers food access, food skills and education and engagement programs in a dignified and welcoming space that brings the community together to grow, cook, share and advocate for good food.

In 2019, CFC offered four food access programs: Drop-in Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and a mobile market in partnership with Fresh Routes. Food skills programs included Kids Grow, Cook, Create, International Ave Kitchen, Kids in the Kitchen, Healthy on a Budget, FoodFit, Wild Stew with the Crew, Teens Cook!, Level Ground Drop-in Gardening, Green Kids Gardening and Intro to Gardening. Education and engagement programs included our Peer Advocacy Office and Youth Hub.

Our annual program survey was conducted through a series of in-person interviews with 75 adult participants from a variety of our programs. When asked "What has changed for you because of your involvement with The Alex CFC?" the most common answers given by participants were that they were more sociable and involved in their community, their health and wellbeing had improved, and that they had gained new knowledge and skills.

“Because of the CFC, I’m happier, lighter, brighter. Not as down, not as dismal. I’m more alive. I’ve lost weight. I have a healthier heart, mind and body.”



99%

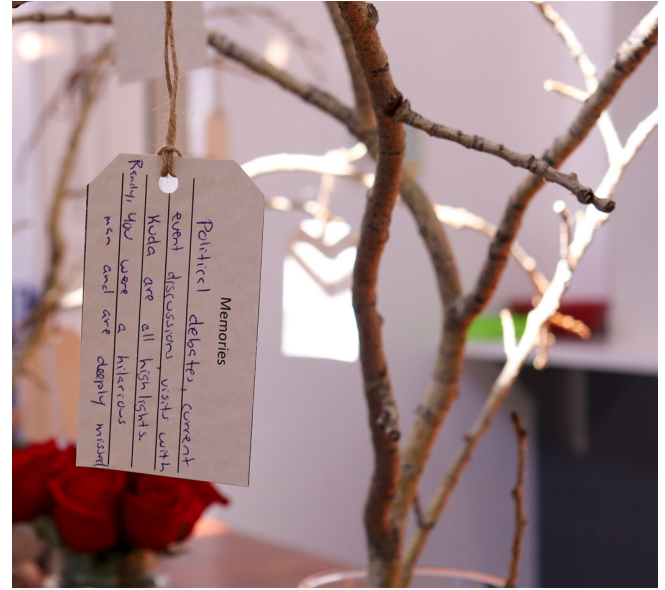
surveyed said
the CFC was an
important source of
healthy food

Housing

Homelessness is a harsh reality in Calgary, and, given the right circumstances, it can happen to anyone. Many of our community members face complex issues related to physical health, mental health and addictions – all contributing factors to homelessness. Through a Housing First model, we believe in giving people a home first, so they can have a safe and stable environment to work through these challenges. We work in partnership with Calgary Homeless Foundation and a vast and collaborative network of partners to provide four programs based on this model: HomeBase, Pathways to Housing, Prelude and Abbeydale Place.

This year, we relocated our Housing Lounge to a new area in our Community Health Centre. It is now fondly named “The Living Room.” This light filled space was thoughtfully decorated and resourced to allow participants to regain the feeling of intimacy and safety previously experienced at our original building. We also added a dedicated medical clinic, which makes consultations and collaboration much easier.

To better support our staff and participants in the process of loss and grief experienced in this line of work, we established our Housing First Celebration of Life in July 2019. This annual event provides space for acknowledging those who had passed away while in our programs and allows us to collectively share and honour our grief.



In addition, in response to the pandemic, we worked in partnership with the Government of Alberta, City of Calgary, Calgary Homeless Foundation, AHS, HomeSpace, CUPS and our sheltering partners to develop and operate Calgary’s Assisted Self-Isolation site which is providing a safe and comfortable place for people to self-isolate who are impacted by COVID-19 and experiencing homelessness.

Our Health Centres



Community Health Centre

Our Community Health Centre is the heart and soul of our primary health care programs. This year 2221 patients came for 21,353 visits with our team of doctors and nurse practitioners.



Seniors Health Centre

Located in the East Village, our Seniors Health Centre provides continuous care for those aged 55+ with complex health issues.



Youth Health Centre

Our Youth Health Centre welcomes youth aged 12-24, providing judgment-free health care and social supports.

Spotlight on...Wellness Initiatives

We have made wellness a priority area this year, for both our community and our staff, knowing that actively engaging in activities that provide reduced stress, community connection and overall wellbeing are critical parts of a good health strategy.

Staff Wellness Initiative

The Alex recognizes how vital self-care is for our staff, many of whom are working on the front-lines of social issues like homelessness, poverty, addictions and mental health. This year we further formalized our commitment to staff wellness by starting a Wellness Committee to allow staff to share ideas of what wellness means to them, recognizing we all have different ways we relax and recharge. Shifts in HR policies reflected these changes, as we moved from “sick days” to “wellness days” and encouraged staff to use this time not just for physical health, but for mental health as well.

Community Wellness

Many of the people who come to The Alex require care that goes beyond a traditional visit to a health clinic. Many of our neighbours are experiencing serious inter-related challenges with poverty, social exclusion, physical and mental health, depression and anxiety, and substance abuse. For many, a visit with a physician is not their only need, and often it’s not even their most pressing need.

Our Community Wellness Initiative has been in-development and will seek to enhance access to upstream, high-impact social and wellness programming and address immediate social, emotional and basic needs. As always, the journey at The Alex begins with connection, community, and dignity first and foremost. We listen and understand each person’s needs, and critical concerns such as housing instability, food security, and social isolation can be addressed.

For Kellie Keefer-Beck, volunteering as part of our wellness initiative was a natural next step in her connection with The Alex. As a neighbour of an Alex family doctor, Kellie started her Alex journey supporting an annual fundraiser hosted by Dr. Deb.

When Kellie began her teacher training in Vinyasa yoga, her aspiration was to become a yoga volunteer. Soon after, she began volunteering with our Community Wellness programs providing twice-weekly yoga and

mindfulness classes for our community members.

“I know yoga and mindfulness can be intimidating. There is an intimacy with yourself that necessitates a safe space to reflect and relax, so in my trauma-informed practice I’ve developed verbal cues that allow for personal space. My biggest reward is being part of a community that was created by community.”

We love our volunteers!

At The Alex we welcome volunteers of all skills and interests to support our programming. From serving meals at our Community Food Centre to driving seniors to appointments, each volunteer brings their expertise, warm smile and commitment to helping their community, and we can't thank them enough!

Here are just a few of the roles volunteers filled in
the past year...

Home Stager **Reiki Master** **Foreign Language Teacher**
Banker **Post-Partum Supporter** **Delivery Person**
Yoga Instructor **Hot Meal Maker** **Program Supporter**
Building Host **Server** **Dental Assistant**
Oral Health Educator **Men's Mentor** **Mover**
Food Procurer **Sandwich Maker** **Wellness Facilitator**
Community Meal Prepper **Fundraiser** **Gardener**
Custodial Support **Lawyer** **Income Tax Filer**



Tax Clinics at The Alex

One of our most popular volunteer-led programs is our tax clinic. Supported by volunteer accountants, the tax clinics help Alex community members file their taxes.

25% of those filing were lifted above the poverty line simply by filing their taxes and receiving benefits they were entitled to! The most common benefits included the GST rebate (92%), Alberta Carbon Tax Rebate (90%), Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (35%), and Canada Pension Plan (30%).

500+
volunteers
contributed

15,503
hours!

Thank you!

The Alex is a registered charity made possible by funding we receive from our government and health system partners, public and private foundations and associations, and generous corporate and private donors. We're grateful for the supporters who power the incredible work we do.

Our full list of donors and supporters
is at thealex.ca/supporters



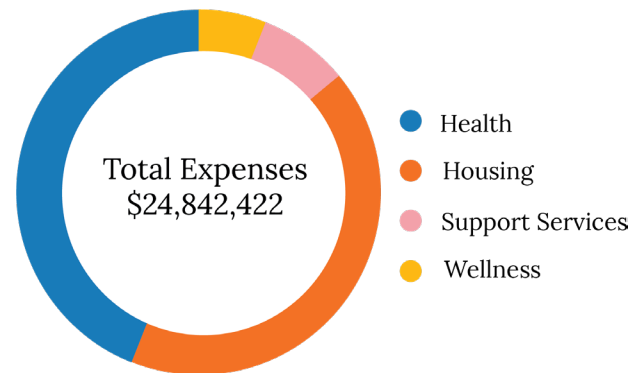
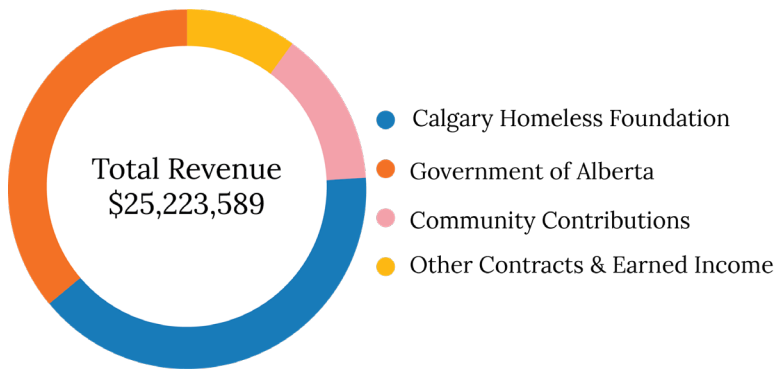
Our Mission

Delivering innovative and
accessible health and social
solutions

Our Vision

A community of healthy individuals

Finances



Our full Audited Financial Statements
are available at thealex.ca

2019-2020
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Donate!

Your support goes a long way
at The Alex, and there are
many ways that you can make
a positive change in someone
else's life!

Support us at thealex.ca/donate

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