



2024/25 Annual Report

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

This past year has been one of tremendous growth and strategic advancement for SMILE Canada - Support Services. Our community has grown to include over 1,100 children, youth, and their families across more than 25 cities in Canada, from community events in Edmonton to hospital-based support in Toronto and Hamilton. We have also seen a significant increase in referrals for newcomer and refugee families raising children with complex disabilities, and our team has been instrumental in providing the critical, culturally safe support they need as they navigate their new lives in Canada.

This year, our partnerships with esteemed funders have allowed us to deepen our impact in unprecedented ways. We launched the landmark Scarborough Strategy, a multi-year, \$1,000,000 investment from the Northpine and The Rossy Foundations, to build a comprehensive ecosystem of local care. With critical support from funders such as Human Concern International, Humaniti, and the International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF), we expanded our emergency response programs to meet the urgent needs of families arriving from conflict zones.

Furthermore, grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) and Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) enabled us to expand our frontline team of Service Navigators and strengthen our organizational capacity. At the same time, support from the TD Ready Commitment, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Canada Service Corps (CSC), and United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) was instrumental in the success of our community-based programs, including Calming Spaces and Community Heroes, which foster inclusion and support youth skill development.

None of this would be possible without the unwavering dedication of our incredible staff, volunteers, families, and supporters. Together, we have driven meaningful change and built a stronger, more inclusive community. We look forward to another year of progress with your continued support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sukaina Dada
Chief Executive Officer



About SMILE

SMILE Canada - Support Services is a registered Canadian charity (846663623RR0001) operating for 15+ years with a primary mandate focused on promoting the social inclusion of children and youth with disabilities from diverse underserved and underrepresented communities, including newcomer and refugee families. Grounded in the principles of equity and advocacy, SMILE works towards shaping inclusive and accessible spaces for children and youth by eliminating barriers in various institutional systems including healthcare, education, and social services.

SMILE's efforts have expanded significantly, addressing gaps in service provision, advocacy, and community support. Their efforts encompass multiple facets in improving the lifestyles of SMILE children and youth and their families through various programs and initiatives focused on skills development, education, and direct family support - providing families with the tools and knowledge to advocate for their rights and navigate the complex landscape of disability services in Canada.

Over 1,100 families are currently registered with SMILE and located in over 25 cities across Ontario and Canada. There are 8 service navigators, each speaking one or two out of SMILE's 5 priority languages (English, Arabic, Somali, Farsi, and Urdu). Additionally, SMILE supports thousands of educators, healthcare professionals and social service providers by providing learning on topics ranging from intersectionality, social determinants of health, and disability justice.

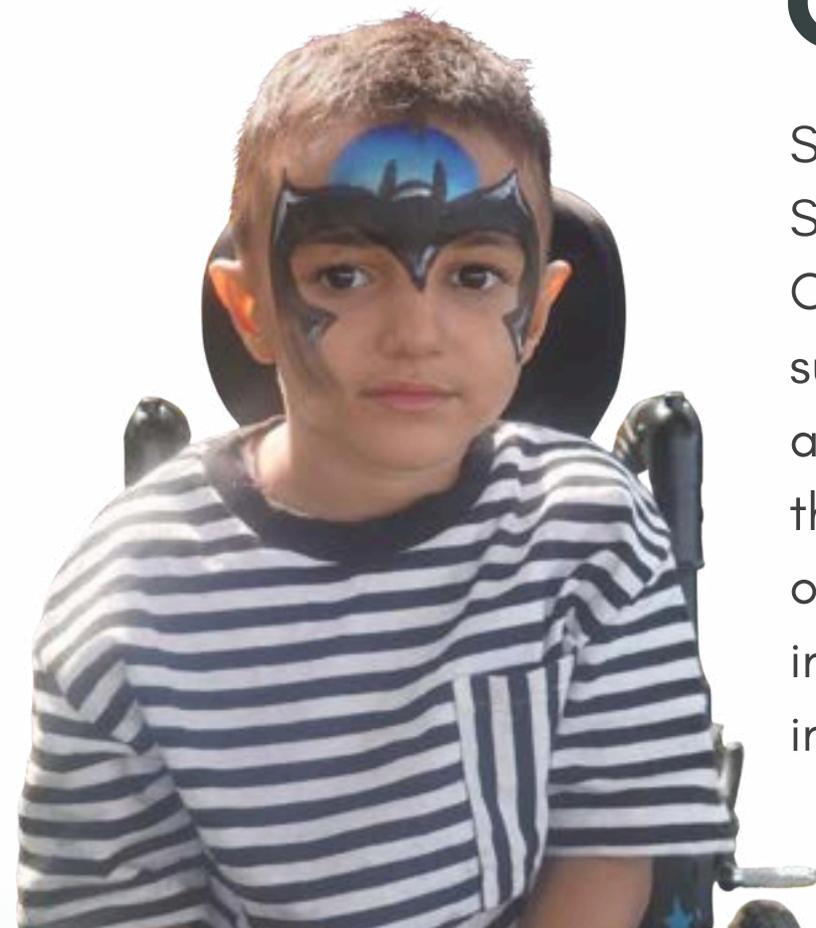
Through programming, events, and community initiatives, SMILE has executed multiple tangible outcomes for marginalized and underrepresented communities in children's healthcare.

Our Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all children and youth are smiling. Our plan of action to do this is by supporting families through various programs and services in a culturally safe and responsive manner.

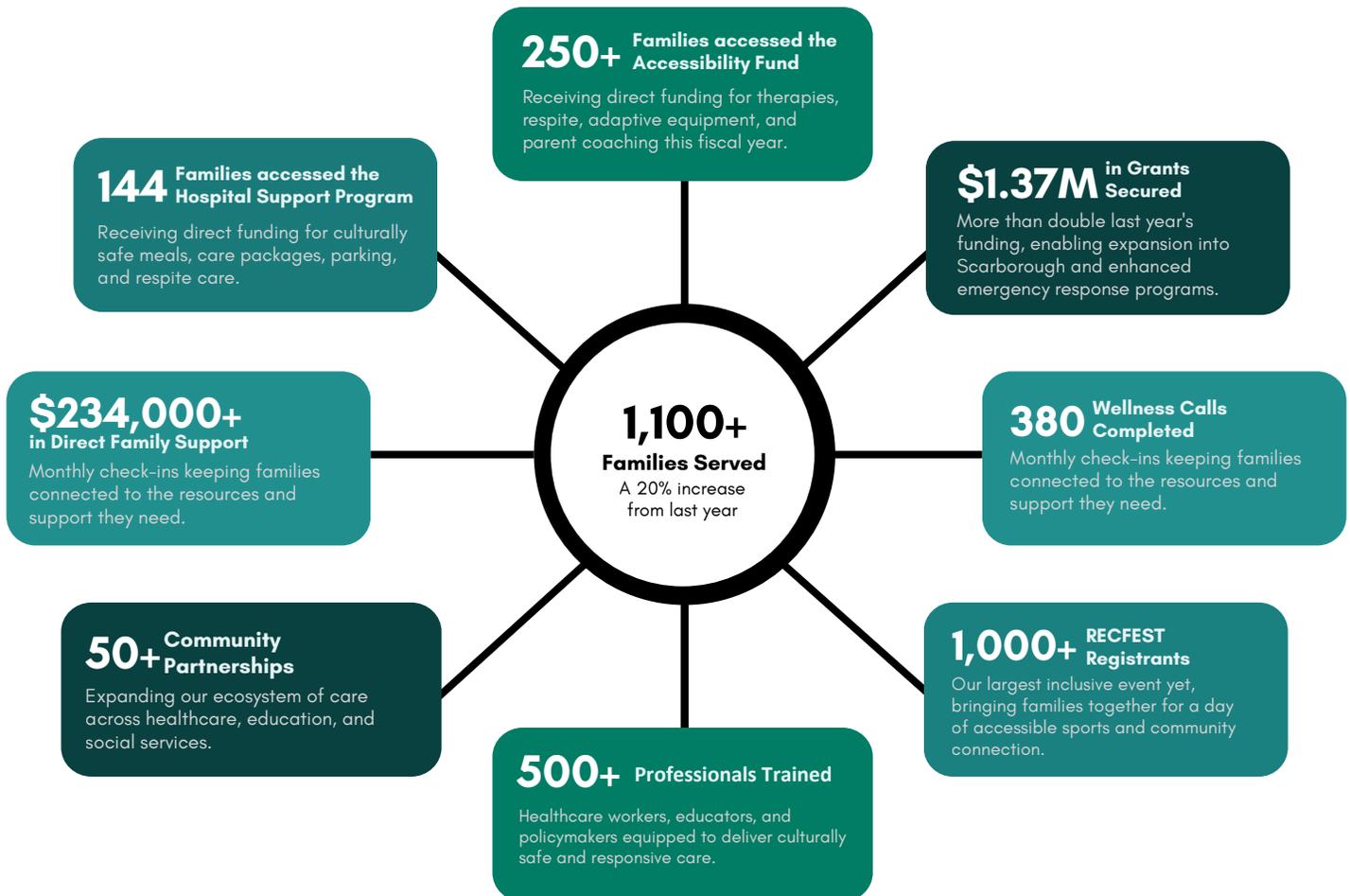
Our Mission

SMILE Canada - Support Services is a registered Canadian charity dedicated to supporting underserved children and youth with disabilities and their families, with a focus area on diverse communities including refugee and immigrant families.



Overview of Impact

in 2024-25, SMILE has achieved the following impact outcomes through direct and indirect services:



Who We Serve

Financially Vulnerable Families

While 10.2% of Canadians live in poverty (Statistics Canada, 2025), 89% of SMILE families are low-income, nearly nine times higher than the national average.

Newcomer Families

56% of the children in our care were born outside Canada. For these families, SMILE is often their first point of contact for disability support, providing guidance in their language as they learn to navigate an unfamiliar system.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

23% of our families are refugees, evacuees, or asylum seekers. These families must navigate two complex systems at once: immigration and disability services. This requires trauma-informed, multilingual support that mainstream services often cannot provide.

Families From Immigrant Backgrounds

Immigrants make up roughly 23% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2023), but they account for 97% of SMILE families, demonstrating the trust our community places in our culturally responsive services.

Culturally Diverse Families

SMILE families come from 91 different countries and speak over 20 languages. Our top communities served include Pakistani, Syrian, Afghan, Somali, and Palestinian families. South Asian and Arab families together represent 85% of all clients.

Families Across Ontario and Beyond

Our families reside across 60+ communities, with the highest concentrations in Peel Region (33%), Toronto (31%), Halton (12%), and Durham (7%). We also serve growing communities in Southwest Ontario, Ottawa, and beyond.

Children With Complex Disabilities

73% of the children we serve have cognitive or intellectual disabilities, requiring specialized therapeutic interventions and long-term care coordination. SMILE helps families navigate these complex needs.

FAMILY SUPPORT & SERVICES

Programs & Services

SMILE aims to support families who have children and youth with disabilities that come from equity-seeking population groups. In response to the needs of children, youth, families, and community, SMILE is proud to continue to provide a hybrid of in-person and virtual support, programs and services to all families. In 2024-25 we were awarded multiple grants allowing us to expand our programs and provide support to more families across Canada.

Service Navigation

Service navigation provides support to families by connecting parents and caregivers with local healthcare, education and social services resources. Service navigation is offered in multiple languages such as English, Urdu, Somali, Arabic, and Farsi. We prioritize support for families who require language-specific services as they often face unique and compounded challenges, including systemic discrimination, limited access to resources, and cultural and language barriers. Service navigators are responsible for intake meetings with families that identify the needs of children and youth and their families.

Assessments that the Service Navigators conduct provide SMILE with insight on how to best support families, taking into account their diverse backgrounds and intersectional needs. The service navigation team provides service delivery in a culturally relevant manner, compiling useful resources for families and providing input on events and programs that help optimize the experience of SMILE children, youth and their families. Families are also connected with various government and private resources within the community to help access funding, respite, therapy, and other support.

Wellness Check-ins

The Wellness Check-In Program has been instrumental to the success of SMILE programs and services. Every month, SMILE staff and volunteers call families to ensure that they are receiving the necessary support they require. In total, the Service Navigation team conducted a total of 380 calls in 2025. These calls allow us to assess the needs and barriers that SMILE families face, including but not limited to: restricted access to food, housing insecurity, financial assistance, advocacy in healthcare and education, and more. Through wellness check-ins, we are able to better understand families' needs and adapt our programs and services accordingly.

FAMILY SUPPORT & SERVICES

Accessibility Fund 2024

The Accessibility Fund is intended to aid marginalized low-income families with children and youth with disabilities and critical illnesses in Canada to access necessary therapeutic services and equipment to improve their quality of life. Based on consistent feedback from families, the program was designed to address the immense financial strain associated with caring for a child with a disability. The program provides financial assistance for the following four streams:

1. Therapy services: including but not limited to speech, occupational, behavioural, IBI, ABA, and physiotherapy and fees for other therapeutic services
2. Respite Services
3. Adaptive Equipment: Such as ceiling lifts, hospital beds, wheelchairs, sensory items and other adaptive equipment
4. Parent Coaching for tailored 1:1 support sessions with ABA, OT, SLP, and PT therapists

The need for this program is profound, and it serves as a critical tool for equity. Data shows that two-thirds of all recipients of accessibility funding are newcomers, and 81% of all applicants are low-income. While the need is great, the program provides tangible relief by offering vital subsidies to offset critical costs. The high demand for respite and therapy services (77%) demonstrates where financial pressures are most severe for families..

FAMILY SUPPORT & SERVICES

Hospital Support Program

The Hospital Support Program (HSP) provides a crucial lifeline to families during moments of medical crisis. A child's hospitalization places an immediate and often overwhelming social, emotional, and financial strain on the entire family unit. The program provides support including, but not limited to:

- Parent support groups
- Counseling
- Child and parent/caregiver wellness packages
- Subsidized parking and meals
- Respite services

We aim to provide this support in a culturally responsive manner, tailored to the needs of our families, such as providing Halal meals. Currently, we serve children and youth in various hospitals such as Sick Kids Hospital, Holland Bloorview, and McMaster Children's Hospital. The program's impact is best understood not just as a single intervention, but as a sustained relationship. In the past year, we significantly scaled our Hospital Support Program, welcoming 74 new children and nearly doubling our capacity to provide essential support to a total of 144 families.

FAMILY SUPPORT & SERVICES

Parent Support Groups

SMILE hosts a series of Parent Support Groups, conducted in languages such as English, Arabic, Somali, and Urdu, to provide SMILE parents with the opportunity to interact, socialize, and exchange resources with fellow caregivers in a safe and welcoming environment. In 2025, these groups continued to be a vital lifeline, covering topics essential for navigating life in Canada. Through activities designed to foster connection and well-being, parents and caregivers build strong peer networks, sharing experiences and providing crucial emotional and social support to one another.

2025 Parent Support Group Highlights

- **English Parent Support Group:** On January 25th, this session focused on caregiver well-being. It featured an open discussion with a psychotherapist on wellness and trauma, a guided breathing and meditation session with a yoga instructor, and the distribution of curated wellness kits to parents.
- **Somali Parent Support Group:** On February 15th, this group provided Somali-speaking parents with practical tools for building strong, healthy relationships with their children through positive parenting strategies. The session also included a creative screen-printing workshop and culturally aware wellness kits featuring Somali perfumes and tea.
- **Urdu Parent Support Group:** On February 22nd, the "Thrive Together" workshop provided self-care strategies for parents supporting children with special needs. The session focused on creating a healthy home environment and equipped caregivers with tools to manage stress and promote their own well-being.



EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

SMILE's Disability Awareness and Inclusion workshops are open to healthcare professionals, educators, community organizations and various institutions across Canada interested in implementing improved accessibility and inclusion policies and practices for those that access their services.



By attending SMILE training and workshops, various professionals and organizations have been able to improve their services through the implementation of culturally safe practices to better accommodate and meet the distinct needs of those at the intersection of racialization, disability, and newcomer status. In 2024, over 15 trainings and workshops were delivered to 1000+ healthcare professionals, settlement agencies, and community social service providers.

Our educational and training workshops aim to spread awareness on the importance of providing culturally safe and responsive support to develop and promote inclusive and safe spaces. Our workshops aim to raise awareness on the intersectional needs of racialized families with children and youth with disabilities, focusing on newcomer families. They are designed to generate conversation, share examples and experiences, and increase participants' understanding of how they can contribute to their organization's journey toward a more inclusive society.

EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

IDPWD 2024: A Journey Together

For December 3rd, SMILE ran its annual **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** campaign. In 2024, the theme was A Journey Together as we aim to support children with disabilities and their families within our local communities. As part of this campaign, the Education and Research team developed a lesson plan on topics of accessibility, inclusion, and supporting children with disabilities in the classroom. The lesson plan was distributed to 120 local elementary, middle, and high schools across the Greater Toronto Area.



***If you are an educator that is interested in receiving the lesson plan for your class,
Please contact rwamuzamile@smilecan.org***

EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Intersecting Narratives of Displacement and Disability: Critical Conversations on Culturally Safe Practice



On December 5, 2024, SMILE Canada hosted an educational event for the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities titled *Intersecting Narratives of Displacement and Disability*. Through a fireside chat, Asmaa Nasser and Rwan Muzamil shared personal experiences navigating healthcare, education, and social services without culturally safe, accessible supports. The event concluded with facilitated discussions and an action-planning activity focused on strengthening culturally safe practices to better support racialized newcomer families with children and youth with disabilities.



EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Black History Month

On February 25th, 2025, SMILE hosted a celebration at the Nia Centre for the Arts highlighting Black artistry and voices. The evening featured keynote remarks from community leaders Omar Mahamed (Executive Director, Mishka Social Services) and Zakaria Abdulle (President, Somali Centre for Culture) on addressing anti-Black racism and strengthening community infrastructure. The program also included spoken word performances, group discussions building on anti-racism action plans, and a showcase of Black artists and entrepreneurs.



Centering Client Narratives in Culturally Safe Practice

On April 16-17, 2025, SMILE Canada delivered two workshops at the Empowered Kids Ontario Spring Symposium in Toronto. Led by CEO Dr. Sukaina Dada and Nida Khan, the sessions emphasized centering client narratives in family-centred care for newcomer children with disabilities. Through SMILE's needs assessment framework and Open Shop entrepreneurship program, attendees learned how storytelling, culturally safe practices, and intersectional approaches can address barriers faced by racialized newcomer families.



EDUCATION & ADVOCACY



World Refugee Day

On June 25th, 2025 SMILE hosted a community event highlighting the intersectional challenges faced by refugees with disabilities. The program featured a panel with advocates Robaba Mohammadi and Mustafa Alsahrdoub, who shared personal experiences of resettlement, systemic barriers, and confronting xenophobia and ableism. Attendees also participated in group discussions on dismantling bias and developing practical strategies to better support refugees with disabilities in workplaces and communities.

Edmonton Community Event: Disability, A Shared Human Experience

As part of its national outreach, SMILE hosted a community event in Edmonton on May 10th, 2025 that brought together service providers, educators, and community leaders to discuss equity, accessibility, and inclusion within Muslim and newcomer communities. Featuring speakers Dr. Muna Saleh, Amber Rahman, and Dr. Sukaina Dada, the event explored the layered experiences of racialized families navigating disability and identified collective strategies to dismantle systemic barriers.



EVENTS & CAMPAIGNS

Move4SMILE

#Move4SMILE is an annual SMILE campaign aimed to raise money for children and youth with disabilities in the community. It encourages community members to fundraise by engaging in sport, recreation and any activity to motivate others to be active in ways that work best for them. In 2024, 6 Move4SMILE events were held across the Greater Toronto Area including: Kick4SMILE, Hoop4SMILE (2), Walk4SMILE in Mississauga and Ottawa, and Paddle4SMILE. Fundraisers were invited to our exclusive RECFEST event in September to celebrate SMILE's impact in the community.



RECFEST

This year, SMILE held its annual RECFEST at the Hangar in North York with over 1000 registrants. RECFEST is an inclusive and accessible sports carnival for children and youth. We had multiple activities and sports such as soccer, football, basketball, ball hockey, alongside a raffle draw with amazing prizes and more. Within each activity, we incorporated variations to ensure it was accessible so each child could participate and feel included. Various community organizations within social, healthcare, education, and community services were in attendance and connected with SMILE families during the event to expand and enhance service coordination amongst the community.



EVENTS & CAMPAIGNS



Facing the Falls: Canadian Premiere

SMILE Canada hosted the Canadian Premiere of Facing the Falls, a documentary following disability rights advocate Cara Yar Khan. The screening featured a fireside chat with Cara and Rayhan Azmat, VP at Cineplex, with proceeds supporting children with disabilities.



THRIVE 2025: From Arrival to Belonging

SMILE partnered with ASE Community Foundation for Black Canadians with Disabilities for this hybrid event centering Black immigrants and refugees with disabilities. Speakers Dr. Ihsan Fajiri and Rwan Muzamil led panels on navigating systemic barriers to healthcare, education, and belonging.



SMILE's Winter Drive

SMILE's annual Winter Drive brought warmth and support to 92 families across three locations. Families received essential winter items and wellness packages, ensuring children with disabilities and their families were cared for during the holiday season.



Sudanese Wellness Event

SMILE partnered with guest therapists Taysir and Hosam to host a wellness event for the Sudanese community. Families affected by ongoing conflict received mental health support, group therapy sessions, and resources for building resilience.



Ahlan Ottawa: Welcoming Newcomer Families

SMILE hosted Ahlan Ottawa, a gathering for Arabic-speaking newcomer families raising children with disabilities. The event featured workshops, expert panels, and community conversations, with respite care available so parents could fully participate.



Ottawa Eid Fair

SMILE's first accessible and inclusive Eid Fair in Ottawa brought families together for face painting, henna, arts and crafts, cookie decorating, games, and a magic show. The event marked a milestone in SMILE's expansion to serve Ottawa's Muslim families.

GRANTS & FUNDING

Northpine Foundation & The Rosy Foundation

In a major strategic initiative to address deep-rooted health inequities, SMILE Canada has received a combined investment of \$1,000,000 over three years from the Northpine Foundation and the Rosy Family Foundation. This transformative funding is dedicated to launching SMILE's Scarborough Strategy, a comprehensive venture designed to support racialized and newcomer families raising children with disabilities. This initiative directly confronts systemic barriers by building a sustainable ecosystem of care within the community. The investment has been instrumental in turning this vision into on-the-ground action, funding the expansion of our operational presence and specialized staff. The initial phase has already yielded significant results, including establishing a new operational base in Scarborough, expanding direct family support to 122 families, driving deep community engagement with over 250 community members, and training 40 local professionals to improve the quality of care across the region.



**HUMAN CONCERN
INTERNATIONAL**

Human Concern International

In response to an urgent and growing need, SMILE Canada, with the vital support of a \$150,000 grant from Human Concern International (HCI), launched the Critical Care Support Program. This initiative is dedicated to providing immediate, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed support to vulnerable refugee families arriving in Canada from areas impacted by conflict and displacement, who often face the immense dual challenge of navigating resettlement while raising children with complex disabilities. The funding from HCI was instrumental in supporting the specialized staff who carry out this vital work, bolstering our frontline teams and enabling our Education Team to conduct vital training for healthcare professionals. This program successfully provided intensive service navigation to over 300 newcomer families and funded essential therapies and equipment for 81 children through a dedicated fund.

GRANTS & FUNDING

Humaniti

To address the urgent needs of refugee families raising children with complex disabilities, SMILE, with the critical support of a \$75,000 funding contribution from the Humaniti Foundation, launched the Emergency Response Program. This initiative provides rapid, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed support to newly arrived families from Palestine, Afghanistan, Sudan, and other conflict-affected areas. It is designed to act as a vital lifeline during their most vulnerable period, stabilizing families and connecting them to a network of long-term care. The funding was instrumental in allowing us to provide immediate interventions through a 12-week intensive support model led by a dedicated Emergency Response Coordinator. The program achieved its goals by providing critical support to 150 refugee families, offering crucial support to approximately 300 parents and caregivers, and funding specialized therapies and adaptive equipment for over 40 children.

Humaniti[™]
FOUNDATION



Enabling Accessibility Fund

Through the support of the Enabling Accessibility Fund, SMILE Canada created and delivered three Multi-sensory Mobile Stations to community spaces and transitional homes, including Sakeenah Homes and the Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network. The stations were designed to fill the gap of culturally responsive social services available to marginalized children with disabilities fleeing domestic violence or experiencing housing instability. The program successfully increased accessibility within partner organizations, with the stations becoming a "beacon of comfort and healing." The project has had a profound impact, benefiting an estimated 500-600 individuals and providing a vital resource for children navigating trauma.

GRANTS & FUNDING

ESDC Canada Service Corps

SMILE's Community Heroes program is funded by Canada Service Corps, a national movement that empowers youth aged 15-30 to gain experience and build important skills while giving back to their community. This program directly addresses the reality that youth with disabilities are often pushed to the margins of society by providing the tools, mentorship, and opportunity to lead. This year, the program's success was demonstrated by 30 young heroes who designed and executed unique community projects. Their achievements were diverse and impactful, including facilitating peer-led growth workshops, innovating intergenerational care packages, championing systemic change for accessibility in community spaces, and forging high-impact partnerships with major institutions like SickKids hospital.



**CANADA
SERVICE
CORPS**



ESDC Canada Summer Jobs

Building on the success of the previous year, SMILE Canada's contribution from Canada Summer Jobs grew significantly, with an award of \$64,364, more than double last year's funding. This grant enabled us to hire 12 Canadian youth over the summer, an expanded team that was crucial for building our organizational capacity. The youth took on key roles as Administrative Assistants, Event Coordinators, Digital Marketing Coordinators, and Education Researchers, and their support was instrumental in scaling our impact. Their work enabled the successful execution of major community events while enhancing the reach and quality of our core family programs and research initiatives.

GRANTS & FUNDING

United Way Greater Toronto

Funded by the United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) Community Program grant, the Open Shop program is dedicated to supporting youth with disabilities by providing them with skills development training in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, independent living, and life skills. The program supports the development of entrepreneurship in SMILE youth—providing support in marketing, product development, essential funding, mentorship, and unwavering support by SMILE Project Coordinators. In 2024, the program successfully launched the businesses of 6 individuals, whilst sustaining support for 5 individuals from the previous year. This assistance enabled them to transform their passion into a reality and provided a revitalized sense of purpose as they developed foundational skill sets in entrepreneurship, marketing, community engagement, and self-confidence.



**United Way
Greater Toronto**



International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF)

The International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF) granted SMILE Canada an amount of \$100,000 to launch the Supporting Critical Needs of Refugee Children with Disabilities program. This critical initiative provides immediate, intensive, and culturally responsive support to newcomer and refugee families who are navigating the immense challenges of resettlement while raising a child with a disability. Thanks to IDRF, SMILE was able to hire dedicated, language-specific Service Navigators who provide needs assessments, crisis intervention, and dedicated advocacy to help families access essential services. This project achieved its aim of filling a crucial gap in Canada's resettlement infrastructure by setting out to support 400 refugee children and an additional 500 of their family members.

GRANTS & FUNDING

TD Ready Commitment Grant

With the support of TD Bank through the TD Ready Commitment, SMILE Canada's Calming Spaces initiative has made a significant impact on community inclusion. This funding allowed us to create and distribute 54 self-regulation toolkits to organizations across Ontario, directly confronting the challenge of inaccessibility in community hubs. The initiative was a clear success, breaking down social barriers and fostering over 50 new community partnerships. The program's resources and training directly benefited an estimated 1,750 individuals and led to a significant rise in families feeling less socially isolated and registering for other SMILE programs.



**TD READY
COMMITMENT**



An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Ontario Trillium Foundation

In response to a significant and sustained increase in demand from newcomer families, particularly those requiring support in Urdu, Hindi, and Arabic, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) awarded SMILE Canada a grant of \$100,000 over 18 months through its Resilient Communities Fund. This strategic investment was dedicated to strengthening our frontline services by expanding our Service Navigation team to meet this growing need. With this support, SMILE successfully hired two new, full-time Service Navigators to provide specialized, in-house support in both Urdu/Hindi and Arabic. This critical expansion of our frontline team was essential for providing tailored, one-on-one support to a growing number of newcomer families, ensuring they can access the specific resources required to support their child.

SMILE

Revenue

Statement of Operations & Changes in Fund Balance - June 30, 2025

Type	Amount
Contributions	\$504,063
Contributions - Zakaat	\$214,341
Grants	\$1,371,145
Events Fundraising Income	\$16,504
Non-Receipted Donations	\$135,853
Other Revenue	\$12,768
Total	\$2,254,674

SMILE

Expenditures

Statement of Operations & Changes in Fund Balance - June 30, 2025

Type	Amount
Family Support Services	\$1,857,826
Administrative Expenses	\$24,739
Fundraising Expenses	\$22,712
Legal and Accounting Expenses	\$27,455
Total	1,932,732

Through the generosity of a single donor who, prior to his passing, left a legacy gift to SMILE in his will, the organization was able to invest \$300,000 in an endowment fund. This endowment was created to protect the organization's future and to secure the long-term delivery of critical services for children and families across Canada.

SMILE

Expenditures

Family Support Services Expenditure

Type	Amount
Grants Expenses	\$1,371,145
Assessment Program and Services Navigation Wages	170,148
SMILE Accessibility Fund	164,582
Parent & Youth Events	\$38,437
Community Awareness	\$20,511
Other Family Support Expense	\$42,231
Emergency Relief Funds	\$50,772
TOTAL	\$1,857,826

THANK YOU

SMILE's Annual Report offers a thorough summary of the services, contributions, and impacts made by the organization throughout the 2024-25 fiscal year. The focus has been on enhancing the health, well-being, and quality of life of SMILE families, by offering a range of services, programs, and events. These comprise, but are not restricted to language-specific Service Navigation, the Accessibility Fund, Hospital Support, Parent Coaching, Wellness, Parent Support Groups, Education and Advocacy and community events. With the support of our donors and grantors, newcomer children and youth with disabilities and their families are able to access culturally safe and accessible services and support through SMILE.

On behalf of the team at SMILE Canada - Support Services, we express our gratitude in receiving your support. This year could not have been accomplished without your support and assistance. Thank you.

