



Annual Report

2023

LETTER FROM SARAH STROLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is with immense gratitude and a sense of accomplishment that I share this message with you, our community of champions for mental health. I am pleased to present our first-ever Annual Report for 2023. We invite you to review the meaningful impact from the past year made possible by your support.

I want to thank our dedicated team: our staff, therapists, volunteers, interns, and Board of Directors. Their commitment to our mission, and most of all to our clients, their compassion, and their hard work have changed the lives of many in our community. One of the best parts of my job is hearing from thankful clients; it is truly heartening to witness the transformative journeys they have experienced.

Looking ahead to the upcoming year, our vision remains steadfast: to make mental health accessible to even more people. I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead. With your continued support, we will build a world where mental health is not a luxury.

Sarah Strole, LCSW
Executive Director



OUR MISSION

Droste Mental Health Services is a non-profit wellness center with a mission to provide convenient, affordable, and inclusive psychotherapy and trauma-informed counseling. We are also committed to the clinical community through our professional training programs and host interns and therapists who are in training.



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40 YEARS OF EMPOWERING RESILIENCE AND HEALING WITHIN

Founded by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in 1982, we are named for Maria Droste zu Vischering (1863-1899), a Good Shepherd Sister renowned for her ability to console those who came to her in pain.

Formerly Maria Droste Counseling Services of NYC, we undertook a name change in 2022 to Droste Mental Health Services, Inc. to improve discoverability for anyone seeking therapy. Our founding values, however, remain the same. For the past 40 years, we have and will continue to be unified in the belief that everyone deserves compassionate mental health care. We have provided thousands of clients in the New York metropolitan area with excellent and affordable mental health care.

We began with two volunteers committed to using their professional skills to give back to the community; now, Droste has a team of over 20 providers who serve more than 200 clients each year. Our team of clinicians, from diverse backgrounds with varied clinical expertise, are all united in our mission to provide excellent and affordable therapy.

While our roots have a Catholic base, our therapy services are not religiously based. We welcome people from all backgrounds, religious affiliations (or lack thereof), and identities, especially those in the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities who have and continue to face discrimination and disenfranchisement.

WHO WE ARE

Droste Mental Health Services is a non-profit organization seeking to make therapy affordable and accessible. Our team includes trained social workers, psychologists, and mental health counselors who have a variety of background and therapeutic approaches including a holistic understanding of the mind/body connection. We are dedicated to helping each person find healing and empowering resilience



WHAT WE DO

We provide mental health services, including individual, couples, family, and group therapy. We recognize healing is not linear, and work with each person to identify and work towards unique therapeutic goals.



Leadership Staff

SARAH STROLE, LCSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOANNE DELUCA
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Anxiety, Stress, Panic, and Phobias
- Chronic Pain & Illness Management
- Codependency
- Depression
- Grief Therapy
- Marriage, Divorce and Relationship Issues
- Life Changes & Transitions
- Parenting Support
- Play Therapy for Children
- Self-Esteem Building
- Sexuality and Gender Identity Exploration
- Personal Growth
- Social Skills
- Teen & School Issues
- Workplace Conflict



I am at Droste because I love the comprehensive approach to mental health services. Providing low-fee mental health services is a value I hold deeply; a way of caring on multiple levels: care for others, care for the world, and care for self. More people with access to affordable therapy creates a ripple effect that positively impacts not only their life but the broader community.

-Jarret Schechter, therapist

Through my decades long relationship as a volunteer therapist and as a clinical supervisor, Droste has always represented a setting where welcome, healing, compassion and warmth are consistently offered. A hallmark of the program has been its dedication to providing cutting-edge mental health services to those who would generally not afford the cost of treatment in conventional settings. Droste's ability to attract a diverse array of clinicians from a variety of disciplines and orientations, has kept the program fresh with current trends in the delivery of care.

--Robert Tobing, therapist

LOOKING BACK ON 2023

Over the past year, Droste Mental Health Services, Inc. has engaged in a strategic planning process to increase brand awareness, support donor acquisition, and grow our clientele. Below are several highlights from the year, as well as challenges that our organization continues to face in the wake of the pandemic.

SUCCESSES

Completed Rebrand: To improve searchability and brand recognition, we have completed the long process of rebranding to Droste Mental Health Services, Inc, including a full website rebuild. We have developed a blog to provide resources and drive traffic to our website through engaging social media content on a variety of mental health topics such as self-compassion, anxiety, phobias, OCD, relationships and divorce. Since implementing this strategy we have seen a 451% increase in site visits compared to the year prior. We have implemented a new email program to provide updates and share resources with the Droste community.

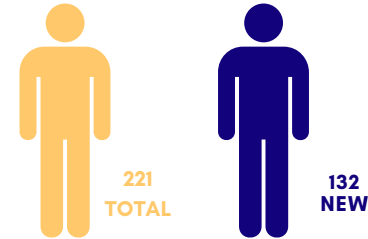
Improved Donor Experience: We have updated and expanded the ways we can accept donations and provided folks a way to cover their credit card fees. This has proved to be a very popular and convenient way for our donors to help us monetarily.

Expanded Community Partnerships: We formalized a partnership with Student Sponsor Partners to provide therapy to their scholars who referred for mental health support. Student Sponsor Partners provides mentorship to at-risk youth in underserved communities across New York City. Droste also participated in a project led by Catholic Charities of New York to identify unmet mental health needs across New York. The project is currently in the initial stage of understanding the inventory of services offered already and a needs assessment of where there may be gaps in these services. The next phase will be to look at how the affiliates of Catholic Charities might work together to fill identified gaps. Additionally, we are pleased to share that Droste has been contracted to support the work of Puppies Behind Bars, an innovative program providing therapy to those incarcerated.

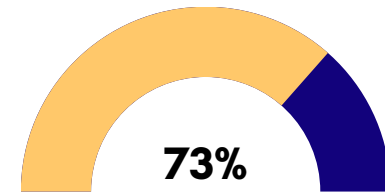
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AT A GLANCE

NUMBER OF CLIENTS IN 2023



Over **\$449,246** in reduced fees were waived for clients



of our clients received mental-health services at a reduced rate.

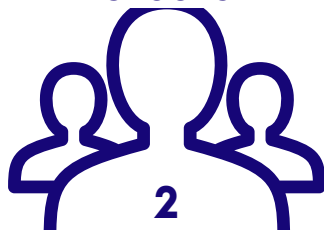
AVERAGE # OF SESSIONS PER CLIENT



TOTAL NUMBER OF SESSIONS



NUMBER OF CLINICAL GROUPS



...CONTINUED

Invested in Staff Professional Development & Resources: We have also been hard at work on developing more support for our clinical team and clients. This has included enhancing resources for risk assessments and updating client welcome paperwork to provide basic psychoeducational information on the therapy process. We added multilingual practitioners, and developed additional curricula on managing stress, emotional awareness, and social skills development. In June, our Executive Director, Sarah Strole, presented at the National Association of Social Worker's New York City conference on mitigating burnout and vicarious trauma.

Engaged in Political Advocacy: Droste has participated in advocacy efforts to make mental health services affordable and accessible at the national level, spearheaded by the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Specifically, Droste participated in a meeting, organized by the National Advocacy Center, to suggest future legislative priorities to the staffers of Senator Sanders and the H.E.L.P. Committee focused on three primary areas: access to care, workforce, and insurance and regulations. In collaboration with Catholic Charities of New York, Droste submitted written testimony to the City Council regarding a proposed legislative package to improve New Yorker's Mental Health, provided video testimony for use in future advocacy efforts by Catholic Charities, and authored two articles, one on the importance of therapy for well-being, and the on the rise of suicide rates among adolescents, for the New York Spanish-language newspaper, El Diario.

CHALLENGES

Post-Pandemic Rental Revenues: The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our rental revenue program, which generates additional revenue by renting extra office space to private practitioners to help offset the cost of providing sliding-scale fees. Many of these practitioners also donated their time to support Droste clients. Our rental revenue remains 69% lower than our pre-pandemic levels. As we've worked to overcome this specific financial challenge, we are grateful for the flexibility our landlord has shown us and the support of a core team of practitioners who supported Droste's mission by continuing to pay rent even while working remotely. As more people return to in-person work, we look forward to seeing our rental revenue return to pre-pandemic levels.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

As we look ahead to 2024, we are excited for a number of new projects aimed at improving Droste's ability to provide affordable and accessible therapy. The biggest project involves developing Droste's capacity to accept health insurance. This involves partnering with commercial insurance providers to become an in-network provider, partnering with a billing company to handle insurance claims, and another large non-profit for the infrastructure necessary for Medicaid billing.

Goals for 2024

One of the foremost goals involves strengthening our fundraising capacity. While Droste has many long-time supporters, we want to continue to grow our community of mission partners to meet the increasing demand for sliding-scale therapy rates. Part of this effort involves founding an Associate Board to bring young professionals interested in mental health awareness and access and looking for a way to give back to their community into Droste's work. Droste plans to continue to expand our community partnerships with the goal of improving access to mental health services. Some of our community partners are referral sources, helping to connect clients looking for quality and affordable mental health services to us; some of our community partners financially support the provision of our mental health services. Droste will continue to apply for additional foundational support for both current programming as well as new programming such as clinical support for pregnant or recently postpartum people or evidence-based trauma counseling for children. Infrastructurally, Droste aims to implement a Salesforce database to more efficiently and easily gather and report data on program functioning. and expanding our community partnerships all with the goal of improving access to mental health services.



"I have struggled with depression for years and have tried therapy on and off. My therapist at Droste has helped me develop ways to cope with the depressive feelings I struggle with. She has helped encourage me to look at where I have power in my life and, more importantly, learn to cope with and set boundaries around things that are not within my control."

-Droste client



"I wasn't sure therapy could help and didn't really understand how therapy was supposed to work. My therapist at Droste wasn't phased by my skepticism and helped me figure out what I wanted to be different in my life and the first step towards change. I would not be where I am without the support of Droste"

-Droste client



OUR PROGRAMMING

Scholarship Fund

Droste's core programming is our scholarship fund. Recognizing the barriers individuals face in accessing mental health care, we offer a sliding scale fee structure that tailors costs to each participant's financial capacity. This approach makes it possible for those unable to afford the standard therapy rate of private practitioners to still access high-quality therapy services without spending months on the waitlists of overwhelmed hospital and community clinics.

Our scholarship fund is solely supported by you, our loyal donors, and is what allows us to continue to offer our services to those who would otherwise be unable to access quality mental health care.

In 2023, \$449,246 in session fees were waived.



Community-Based Mental Health Program

Through a generous grant from Catholic Charities of New York, Droste is able to provide 16 free counseling sessions to students, their parents, and teachers of parochial and public charter schools in need of additional mental health services, particularly those in schools in low-resourced areas or those schools without significant mental health infrastructure.

Because of the partnerships established through this grant, Droste was in a position to provide immediate mental health support when our partner schools have experienced crises. Some crises have been large-scale, like Droste's support of Ukrainian students, some of whom fled the war and others who still had family in the Ukraine. Other crises have been experienced by the school community, like one partner school who experienced the sudden and unexpected loss of a student. We are also able to address individual crises, like for those students who have been navigating homelessness.

In 2023, this grant provided access to over 500 sessions for almost 50 families; 85% of the clients served were people of color and 80% were under the age of 18.

Hear from our partner schools

OUR PROGRAMMING CONTINUED

Clinical Training Program

Since 1982, Droste Mental Health Services has hosted graduate-level students in our Clinical Training Program to complete an internship doing outpatient mental health therapy. Our Clinical Training Program nurtures future professionals, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills, ultimately enhancing the well-being of our clients by ensuring professionals joining the field have solid foundational skills.

Each year, three or four graduate student interns are selected from over 40 applicants. At the heart of our program lies the recognition that hands-on experience is invaluable for aspiring mental health counselors and social workers, but that the hands-on experience must be accompanied by high-quality, intensive supervision. Interns participating in our program undergo a comprehensive training curriculum and receive supervision that guides them through the phases of the treatment: assessment and diagnosis, treatment planning and modalities, interventions, safety planning, and the termination process.

Droste's interns are matched with clients who are open to working with someone still in training. Benefits of working with an intern include fresh perspectives and enthusiasm, immersion in the latest theories and techniques, increased availability, collaborative growth experience, and the ability to take advantage of a good personality fit while still having the comfort of knowing there is intensive supervisory support. Many interns join Droste as therapists after they end their internship; however, even those who move on to other places of work or away from New York bring Droste's orientation to mental health service provision and the solid foundational skills learned with them wherever they go.

"Droste is a place where I truly understand "大爱无疆" (love without border) in a professional mental health setting. The unconditional responsiveness and the wholehearted best regard for our clients are the greatest treasures I will carry with me in my future career as a therapist."

–Jessica Yang, MHC Candidate 2024

"The experience I have gotten at Droste has allowed me to strengthen my cultural awareness and has given me the opportunity to be a part of expanding access to quality, responsive mental health care that so often, the most vulnerable groups of adolescents, in particular BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth, lack."

–Talisa Kouyoumjian, MHC Candidate 2024

"My internship at Droste has been immeasurably enriching, far exceeding the average social work placement experience. Sarah Strole's quality infrastructure from an operational point of view is excellent exposure to the technical factors involved in building a thriving practice for the long term, but it is her supervision in particular that creates an optimal environment for professional clinical development. Her consistent, expansive, and thoughtful supervision felt like a top-notch dynamic seminar in itself, emphasizing learning through experience and honing and refining one's professional intuitions through a person-centered lens."

– Jenna Martinez, MSW Candidate 2024

"My experience at Droste has been transformative. The personalized attention and guidance I received as an intern has offered me insights into therapeutic interventions, taught me how to make ethical judgment calls both thoughtfully and quickly. Droste stands out as a diverse and multicultural space with empathetic and genuinely kind individuals, where people respect each other's values and beliefs, creating a non-judgmental and safe environment for sharing, both among colleagues and with clients."

–Alizay Baluch, MHC Candidate 2024

"Droste has been the perfect setting for me to put my theoretical knowledge to practice somewhere that I feel completely supported. Droste has given me the space to be reflective, explore different therapeutic styles, and lean into my therapeutic work with curiosity and excitement."

–Durga Jambunathan, MHC Candidate 2024

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond our programs, we also have partnerships throughout the community to provide mental health advocacy and education as well as mental health services. We are grateful for the dedication and collaboration of our community partners.



Good Shepherd National Advocacy Center

"What makes the work of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd especially valuable in the vast advocacy ecosystem in Washington, D.C.? Its connection to Good Shepherd agencies like Droste Mental Health Services, Inc. Droste reaches a wide swath of people in need through its sliding scale rates and helps NAC speak with credibility about the affordability crisis in mental health care. Droste has given NAC insights about the strained mental health workforce and informed our advocacy around efforts to better support critical behavioral health professionals. Working together, we bring important voices to Capitol Hill."

--Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director



National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

"The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) works to not only protect children but also provide resources to help those children who have been harmed to heal. The Family Advocacy Outreach Network (FAON) builds bridges between a client unsure of where to turn for help and a provider that has the right expertise and desire to offer a helping hand. NCMEC is grateful that Droste has joined the FAON network, and that they are ready and willing to help those we serve feel less lost after experiencing victimization."

--Shannon Traore, Senior Program Manager



Good Shepherd Volunteers

"The service our volunteers are engaged in is taxing emotionally and often brings to the surface areas of personal pain and challenge. Droste provides these young adults with access to caring and thoughtful mental health professionals at an affordable cost which makes it possible for them to get the help they need. This support is vital to the flourishing of our program participants and sets them on a lifelong trajectory of caring for their own mental health as they serve others."

--Austin Applebach, Director



Puppies Behind Bars

"Droste Mental Health Services and the Executive Director, Sarah Strole, have become invaluable members of Puppies Behind Bars's team. Through providing PTSD and Suicide Awareness training for PBB staff and incarcerated puppy raisers, Droste has enhanced the services we provide to our combat veteran and first responder clients. We are grateful to Droste for the support available to PBB to assist our clients as we vet applicants, pair clients with dogs, through our 14-day client training, and beyond."

-Nora Moran, Director

SSP

"Student Sponsor Partners has seen our students truly benefit from their individualized therapy provided by licensed therapists. Droste does a great job of updating SSP on student progress and initiates recommendations to support students. We are grateful for the collaboration and partnership we have created."

-Shanna Mahl, Director of Academics



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR 2023 DONORS

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Interested in helping us make a difference?

As a small non-profit, your gift makes an immediate difference in our ability to provide needed clinical services in support of the mental well-being of our community. We can't do this work without you, our mission partners, and value each and every dollar given to help support making mental health services affordable and accessible.

While financial support is critical for continuing our work, there are many other ways to support Droste. Here are some other ways to get involved:

- Talk to your place of work to see if they would provide a charitable gift or matching funds!
- Follow us on social media, tag and share posts with friends, and spread the word to your network about the work we are doing. Invite your friends, family, and colleagues to [subscribe](#) to our newsletter to receive updates on the work we are doing or become mission partners themselves.
- Looking to donate something tangible? Check out our Amazon [wishlist](#) for supplies that go to support therapy activities with kids and teens or resources for our team's continued learning.
- Mark your calendars and join us at our annual spring fundraiser!
- Volunteer your time! We are always looking for folks interested in taking on projects. Some common areas of support include graphic design, grant writing, marketing, and fundraising!



MAKE A DONATION

All donations are 100% tax deductible. We steward your gift with care to create meaningful and life-changing impact. 89 cents of every dollar goes directly to our Scholarship Program which provides sliding-scale rates for therapy sessions. The remaining 11 cents goes to support our general operations; things like our rent, electricity and internet bills. Your gift is vital in helping us continue to provide mental health services at flexible prices to clients in a geographically convenient location.

We welcome both one-time gifts as well as recurring donations. Visit our website at www.drostemhservices.org and click on the 'DONATE' button or mail a check to:

Droste Mental Health Services, Inc.
171 Madison Ave. | Suite 400 | New York, NY 10016

Droste Mental Health Services, Inc.
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