

2016 Regional Teleconferences Report

Stopping The Violence Counselling Programs

Stopping the Violence Outreach Programs

Multicultural Outreach Programs

Community-Based Victim Services Programs

OVERVIEW

EVA BC facilitated four teleconference calls with Stopping the Violence counsellors, Stopping the Violence Outreach and Multicultural Outreach workers, and Community-Based Victim Service workers between May 14th and May 26th of 2016. Each call was two hours long. In total, 68 STV, ORS and CBVS workers registered for these calls.

Calls were grouped by availability and worker's schedules rather than by region as in previous years, with individual workers choosing their preferred dates. The topics for discussion were chosen from submissions by participants upon registration. Stopping the Violence Counsellors took part in two calls, while Community-Based Victim Services and Stopping the Violence Outreach and Multicultural Outreach Programs jointly participated in two calls.

Following is a summary of the main topics and issues that came up in the calls, and highlights of the discussions that took place.

COMMUNITY NEEDS VS. RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO MEET THOSE NEEDS

The overwhelming consensus of all the anti-violence workers on all of the 2016 teleconference calls were that there was a need for more resources for survivors of gender-based violence in their community to address case loads, waitlists, gaps in service, and overwhelming demand for existing services.

There are also communities with no community based services at all that must be addressed.

EVA BC UPDATES

Teleconference call participants were provided with the following brief updates on key EVA BC initiatives:

1. 2015 Annual Training Forum - Together! BC Collaborates

The 2015 ATF was a unique collaboration between EVA BC, the BC Society of Transition Houses, Police Victim Services of BC, BC Association of Chiefs of Police, RCMP, and the Province of BC with support from BC Housing and Legal Services Society. Approximately 900 participants from multiple sectors attended on December 9th and 10th, 2015 in Vancouver. All participants were provided with a link to the hand-outs from the presentations on the EVA BC website at endingviolence.org.

2. BC Missing Women's Network

EVA BC partnered with the RCMP "E" Division's BC Missing Persons Center and the Surrey Women's Centre to develop a new, province-wide BC Missing Women Network in 2015.

This new province-wide Network is an extension of a successful pilot project developed by the Surrey Women's Centre (SWC) that established a communication system between law enforcement and victim services in the community to help locate missing women and youth and to keep them safe, while respecting their right to privacy.

In this new BC Missing Women Network, police from across the province will provide notices of missing women to EVA BC, who will in turn fan out that notice to service providers in the relevant region(s). The service providers are then able to advise the appropriate police force, the BC Police Missing Persons Center and/or EVA BC of the circumstances of the missing person – if they have seen her; whether or not she is safe – and also to act as a bridge in those cases where the police wish to touch base with that woman, if it is appropriate to do so. Members of the network who wish to remain anonymous may request that EVA BC forward information to the relevant police force on their behalf.

The primary intentions of the BC Missing Women Rapid Response Locator Network are to:

- 1) Locate women and children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence that could result in serious bodily harm or death.
- 2) Protect the anonymity and whereabouts of women and children who are fleeing violence, particularly in cases where their estranged partner or other extended family reports them as missing.
- 3) Stop alleged abusive partners from exploiting police resources to find and gain access to women fleeing abusive relationships.
- 4) End the impasse that can occur between women-serving agencies protecting the rights of women fleeing violence to access confidential services; and police investigating a missing person report.

EVA BC recently wrote to BC's Minister of Justice, the Honourable Suzanne Anton, to express our concerns about a subsection of BC's new Provincial Policing Standards governing missing persons investigations that could discourage women and their service providers from contacting the Missing Women Response Network.

While we support the underlying principles of the new section on Specialized Investigations, we think there is a potentially problematic issue with the regulation "Concluding a Missing Person's Investigation" slated to come into effect on September 1, 2016. This regulation requires the investigating officer to conduct a "safe and wellness check" that includes personal, face-to-face communication with the missing person to confirm their identity and to assess their wellbeing before the investigator can close the missing person file. While this may be a best practice in some missing person cases, it can prove problematic when a woman is "missing" on purpose because of fears for her safety, and/or when she is the subject of an active warrant and fears arrest.

We are urging the Ministry to consider how the new provincial standards can be met, while recognizing the success of the Missing Women Response Network that provides anonymity for women too fearful to confirm their specific whereabouts.

3. Be More Than a Bystander

Now in its fifth year, the publicity reach of this program is conservatively estimated to be in excess of 360 million impressions. The main components of the BMTAB program are to 1) develop videos and messages via a broad public awareness campaign featuring BC Lions players encouraging the public, men esp. to speak up and not stay silent about violence against women, and to 2) deliver a school program to train high school students how to speak up about disrespect, abuse and violence throughout BC.

Recently, we have also delivered a number of Indigenous Be More Than a Bystander facilitated by JR LaRose made possible by a Civil Forfeiture Grant from the BC Gov. and another from the Department of Justice Victim and Survivors of Crime Awareness Week grants.

BMTAB has won several awards, been highlighted in a global session at the United Nations in New York, and been directly responsible for a number of spin-off campaigns across Canada.

4. Community Coordination For Women's Safety

CCWS helps BC communities develop new models and improve existing models of cross-sector coordination on violence against women to increase women's safety.

Our incredible CCWS team connects with communities throughout BC all year long, delivering and delivering trainings and providing consultation and support. Here are some examples of the work they have been doing in recent months:

Capacity Building Sessions

- Records Management for Interagency Case Assessment Teams (Kelowna; October 1, 2015)
- VAWIR Strategic Plan (Kelowna; October 28, 2015)
- Working Collaboratively to Identify and Respond to Highest Risk Domestic Violence (Powell River; November 3 & 4, 2015)
- Working Together to Increase Safety (Prince Rupert; November 17 & 18, 2015)
- Third Party Reporting of Sexual Assault; Access to the Criminal Justice System for Marginalized Victims of Sexual Assault (It's Never Okay: The 2015 Summit on Sexual Violence and Harassment; Toronto; November 18, 2015)
- Working Collaboratively to Identify and Respond to Highest Risk Domestic Violence (Surrey; November 26 & 27, 2015)
- VAWIR Strategic Planning (Penticton; December 2, 2015)
- Interagency Case Assessment Teams: Working Together to Reduce the Impact of Domestic Violence (Kamloops; December 3, 2015)
- Interagency Case Assessment Teams: Working Together to Reduce the Impact of Domestic Violence (BC Collaborates Training Forum; Vancouver; December 9, 2015)
- Information Sharing Keynote Panel Discussion (BC Collaborates Training Forum; Vancouver; December 10, 2015)
- Increasing Safety: Collaborative Risk Management for Domestic Violence Prevention (BC Collaborates Training Forum; Vancouver; December 10, 2015)
- Working Collaboratively to Identify and Respond to Highest Risk Domestic Violence (Prince George; February 11 & 12, 2016):
- Community Collaboration Teams: Working Together to Reduce the Impact of Domestic Violence Regional Training Workshop (Dawson Creek; March 1 & 2, 2016)

CCWS Support for Projects Addressing Violence Against Indigenous Women:

CCWS works hard to integrate a comprehensive approach emphasizing the involvement of Indigenous communities and service providers into all its community development work to increase the safety of Indigenous women. CCWS provides support, mentoring and knowledge sharing for projects addressing violence against Indigenous women, such as the Indigenous Communities Safety Project (ICSP) run by EVA BC.

Recently, CCWS provided support for the development and delivery of training on Risk Identification and Safety Planning for Indigenous communities.

CCWS continues to support the development of a unique VAWIR and ICAT initiative in the Nisga'a Nation. The initiative includes the four Nisga'a Villages (Gitlaxt'aamiks, Gingolx, Gitwinksihlkw and Laxgalts'ap) in the Nass Valley as well as three urban locals (Terrace, Prince Rupert/Port Edward and Vancouver), which provide a voice for Nisga'a citizens who live outside the Nass Valley. In 2016, CCWS was contracted by Nisga'a Lisims Government to provide intensive support and assistance with development of domestic violence protocols for the nation.

VAWIR Committee Conference Calls

CCWS facilitates two conference calls each year for coordination committees throughout the province. Most recently, 23 participants got a chance to connect by phone on March 10th. Discussion focused on how groups are meeting the demands of building or keeping interest in VAWIR or sexual assault coordination given the increased interest and activity in ICATs, Safe Relationships, Safe Children projects and other cross-sector teams, as well as sharing their ideas for invigorating and reenergizing VAWIR and sexual assault coordination initiatives.

Provincial Working Group

The CCWS Working Group, which meets twice a year, is a forum for discussing challenges to the safety of women and children created by policy and program implementation. Its most recent meeting, held on February 23, 2016, was the group's 32nd meeting since it began in November 2001.

The Working Group currently has 47 members who represent a broad range of system- and community-based sectors providing technical expertise and liaison between their sector and CCWS.

5. Indigenous Communities Safety Project

The Indigenous Communities Safety Project (ICSP) provides knowledge sharing to Aboriginal leadership (including governance leadership, service providers and the natural leadership) in Aboriginal communities (First Nations and urban Aboriginal communities) related to criminal justice, family justice and child protection laws, policies and practices that directly affect police and government responses to domestic and sexual violence, child abuse and neglect. The purpose of the project is to empower Aboriginal service providers to assist Aboriginal communities – and especially women and children – to become safer, to be aware of their legal rights, to understand the lethal risk factors and to access services and the justice system if they become victimized. We will also work to foster connections and relations between Aboriginal leadership and service providers with anti-violence service providers in the regions.

6. Safe Choices Program

Safe Choices Support and Education Program focuses on improving the health and safety of LGBT2SQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, Two-Spirit and queer)

women who are currently or have been in abusive same-sex/gender relationships and preventing relationship violence. Safe Choices works by providing information and tools in the form of community workshops that encourage healthy relationships, as well as delivering educational workshops that focus on LGBT2SQ women's experiences, for those who work in anti-violence, victims services, social services and health care settings.

The Safe Choices program delivered several successful workshops during the 2015-16 fiscal year. Service Provider workshops were delivered to staff from bc211/VictimLink, Chimo Community Services, Vancouver College of Counsellor Training, Hollyburn Family Services, Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), and to participants attending the *Together! BC Collaborates to Stop Sexual & Domestic Violence* multi-sector training forum. Healthy Relationships workshops were delivered for BOLDfest, UBC Consent Week, and Simon Fraser University (co-hosted by the SFU Women's Centre and Out On Campus).

7. Western Canada Sexual Assault Initiative

This is the second year of this two-year project in partnership with other sexual assault centres and programs across Western Canada. In the first year, we conducted a needs assessment. This year we have developed policy and protocols for campuses, Tip Sheets on responding to disclosures for various sectors from police through nurses and doctors to high schools, and updated and expanded the Sexual Assault Victim Support Worker Handbook.

8. Partnerships

BC Dental Hygienists' Association

In December 2015, EVA BC and the BC Association of Dental Hygienists (BCDHA) announced its new partnership. The BCDHA heard about EVA BC as a result of our Be More Than a Bystander campaign and approached us to say they wanted to do their part to help women who are being impacted by violence and abuse. To that end, they are accessing specialized training that supports them in identifying possible indicators of abuse, teaches them how to respond and provide referrals and resources. They have also been promoting an awareness campaign for the nearly 3,000 registered dental hygienists throughout the province who are their members.

PeaceGeeks at VanHacks

Earlier this year, EVA BC met with PeaceGeeks, a global non-profit volunteer organization that uses their technology skills to help create positive change in the world. This led to us being invited to pitch an idea for app development at the VanHacks ("hackathon") event on March 5, 2016. Our challenge to them was to develop a mobile personal security app designed to work as a 24/7 monitored alarm system. The winner of the hackathon was Axiom Zen, who developed an app for EVA BC. We will be exploring this further with them.

Resource Sector Training Film

This training film that addresses the issue of violence against women in the workplace was produced by EVA BC in partnership with the BC Ministry of Jobs,

Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour and Encana. It's a new, 30-minute video that brings our "Be More Than a Bystander" model to the resource sector.

Community Vitality Index (CVI)

EVA BC is a member of the Advisory Group for this project focused on measuring and tracking women's wellbeing in resource industry communities. EVA BC staff have been participating in meetings, working with the research team at the University of Guelph and Tamitik Status of Women in Kitimat.

9. Trainings Update

EVA BC and CCWS have continued to deliver an incredible amount of training throughout the province in the past year. Of those not mentioned above:

- 2 offerings of our Responding to Sexual Assault for front line workers
- UBC training to 200 resident life staff on responding to disclosures of sexual assault (resident advisors and student council).
- Training to 164 transit police officers regarding gendered violence and trauma-informed responses to disclosures of sexual violence.
- A full-day workshop on "Relationship and Sexual Violence" to approximately 60 staff of Westcoast Family Centres.
- A 3-hour training to 100 BCIT staff and contracted security services on responding to disclosures of sexual violence and the BCIT sexual assault policy.

10. Ongoing Services To Members

Ongoing services to member programs include our 1 800 Support Information and Debriefing toll free line, ongoing support and mentoring, research and analysis, training, resources and publications, listservs, newsletters, Facebook, EVA Notes, and regional teleconferences.

Community-Based Victim Services and Stopping the Violence and Multicultural Outreach Programs

Requested Agenda Items:

1. Updates to procurement
2. Engaging men and boys in anti-violence work
3. Legal Aid Qualifications, and legal services for low income women who don't qualify for Legal Aid
4. Training judiciary and engaging Crown
5. Family violence and the new family law act
6. Family violence and relocation - how to help?
7. How to help better navigate the "systems", especially with regards to sexual violence
8. CVAP: cost coverage not sufficient based on today's cost of living, and claims being denied
9. MCFD - is the new approach to child protection working (if not what can be done collectively)
10. Sexual assault responses
11. Supports for clients experiencing complex trauma, and trauma-informed practice training opportunities
12. RCMP responses in rural communities (e.g., primary aggressor)
13. Third party reporting for areas that do not have access to anyone trained
14. Updated Records Management Guidelines and a Best Practices Manual for Outreach programs
15. Monthly reporting
16. Safe housing for women who are deemed violent and/or have addiction issues
17. Access to services for offenders
18. ICAT referrals and files
19. Collaboration with other services or community resources: how to get key community members involved
20. Court support for children and youth
21. Police accountability – Need for training
22. Victim Services working with offenders

Discussion Around Agenda Items

1. Updates to procurement

All programs remain very concerned about the any upcoming procurement process and the possible impacts on their programs. These concerns remain:

- Potential for outsider organizations to bid on contracts (this has been the experience for service providers in other sectors).
- Potential for a loss of services being provided by organizations with feminist perspective.
- Potential for community coordination efforts to be impacted in a negative way.
- Service delivery disruptions.
- Negative impacts on clients.
- The time required to complete the RFP process

EVA BC provided the following update:

- The Ministry is continuing with its regular Program Application process for fiscal year 2016-17 contracts for Victim Service and Violence against Women programs. Contract terms for 2016-17 will be 16 months, running from April 1st, 2016 to July 31st, 2017. Program Application packages have been sent to contracted service providers.
- The MPSSG will proceed with plans for open procurement for contracted Victim Service and Violence Against Women Programs beginning in January 2017. This will include contracts in existing service areas at current funding amounts.
- It's expected to take until July 2018 to complete the procurement process.
- The final procurement plan will be released close to the end of 2016.
- In response to feedback from service providers, the Ministry has decided not to proceed with a new funding formula or with the creation of new service areas at this time.
- The Ministry is exploring vendor training opportunities to assist service providers in responding to open procurement.
- Further information on vendor training and procurement timelines will be provided in the coming months.

Callers were referred to the Ministry of Justice's "Procurement of victim Services webpage at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/service-providers/procurement> for more information and to stay updated.

Comments:

"We are worried about what procurement is going to look like. Will it pit agencies against each other in our community?"

“How are we supposed to find the time to complete a request for proposals, when our plates are already so full? Who is supposed to do that? A volunteer Board member with no experience?”

2. Engaging men and boys in anti-violence work

EVA BC has been receiving an increasing number of inquiries about engaging men and boys in anti-violence work. There is a great deal of interest in and demand for presentations from our award-winning Be More Than a Bystander program. Whenever possible, we arrange for a local Community-Based Victim Service worker or Outreach worker to attend BMTAB presentations to increase awareness about their services.

Callers were referred to the EVA BC website for more information on the [Be More Than a Bystander Program](#).

Comments:

“Because men are part of the problem, they need to be part of the solution.”

“Sometimes boys and men take the issue more seriously if they hear a male talking about it instead of a female.”

3. Legal Aid Qualifications, and legal services for low income women who don't qualify for Legal Aid.

Workers are frustrated that so few of their clients fleeing abuse qualify for Legal Aid. EVA BC receives frequent calls and emails from workers looking for resources for their clients who don't qualify for Legal Aid, but can't afford a lawyer. They are seeing a great many women who are forced to represent themselves in Family Court. Their situation is often exacerbated by their partner having more financial means than they have, and therefore being able to afford a lawyer, or a better lawyer, and /or more hours of a lawyer's time.

Callers were referred to the Legal Services Society “Family Law in BC” webpage at <http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/> for more information [Legal Aid](#) and family law, and to LSS's new mylawbc.com website.

Comments:

“I work in a rural community. We have one Duty Counsel, and she also works a lot for legal aid, so she often has a conflict and can't represent the woman.”

“We can support women, but we can't provide legal advice.”

“There are language barriers for many of my clients who are trying to fill out the forms themselves.”

“Our community had a wonderful pilot project where designated para-legals worked under the supervision of a lawyer to help people in court. It was discontinued.”

“My community had a public interest work placement program. Law students worked under a lawyer to provide legal advice and fill out forms, but could not represent them.”

“Vancouver is fortunate to now have RISE Women’s Legal Centre, but other communities have nothing to fill in the gaps.”

4. Training judiciary and engaging Crown

In the wake of the recent comments made by Alberta’s Judge Robin Camp (he berated the complainant and asked her why she didn’t “just keep her knees together”) when he acquitted Scott Wagar of sexual assault, and the Ghomeshi sexual assault trial and decision, many workers are concerned about what appears to be a lack of understanding of the impacts and dynamics of sexual assault in the legal system. They are calling for trauma-informed training around sexual assault for Crown and the judiciary, and asking what role EVA BC can play.

Comments:

“I was expecting Ghomeshi to be acquitted, but I never dreamed the Judge would make such harsh comments about the complainants. That was worse case scenario.”

“Do Judges not get any training about sexual assault? They just don’t get it.”

5. Family violence and the new family law act

There is still some confusion in the field about the 2013 changes to the Family Law Act, and how they are being interpreted by the courts. There are also concerns that the emphasis on shared guardianship can result more opportunities for abusive men to control and harass the mother of their children.

Comments:

“One big challenge with new Family Law Act is that women are finding it difficult to travel with the kids because the ex has shared guardianship, and refuses to let them travel. By the time the women takes it through court, the travel dates are passed and the kids don’t get to go.”

“Who, if anyone, is looking at the wrinkles in the Family Law Act?”

“I for one would really appreciate some training on how best to support women with family law issues.”

“I have clients who are forced to give their abusive ex access to the children, even though they don’t want to go.”

“I have clients with that same problem. And when the kids come home, they repeat the mean things dad said to them and act out for days.”

6. Family violence and relocation - how to help?

One of the factors that keeps women in abusive relationships is a lack of resources to relocate. Moving is costly and time consuming, particularly if the woman needs to move covertly and in a hurry. Some suggestions made by workers included accessing transition houses, requesting funds for location through the Crime Victim Assistance Program, accessing a Homeless Outreach Prevention Program, and the Melissa Chatham Memorial Fund administered by EVA BC.

Comments:

“There’s a catch-22 with Income Assistance – she needs to leave to get money for a damage deposit, but she can’t leave until she gets it.”

“Northern Health has a medical bus which takes people to appointments in other cities and towns along their route, including Vancouver. It will take a woman who is at risk from an abuser at a low fare – it’s like \$40 to Vancouver. The woman needs a letter from a service provider that she is at risk. The driver will be wary, and call the RCMP if he is concerned.”

“Here, we have a Domestic Violence Action Plan Fund that can pay for things like plane tickets and relocation expenses.”

7. How to help better navigate the "systems", especially with regards to sexual violence

Workers were concerned about both how to best support women through a complicated system with multiple players and protocols, and how to prepare them for a process that is likely to re-traumatize them. They pointed out that very few offenders are charged, and many of those charged never go to trial. Of those that go to trial, only about 3% are convicted.

Workers were referred to EVA BC’s Community Coordination for Women’s Safety Program for information and support around building and strengthening community protocols and relationships.

Comments:

“The system needs to shift so immensely in sexual violence that it’s overwhelming to think about it. How do you best prepare someone for a process that’s going to re-traumatize them?”

“The problem is huge, especially in small communities. It’s very overwhelming. EVA’s recent training, ‘Working With Survivors of Recent Sexual Assault’, was very helpful. Good tools, connections and resources came from that.”

“Women who think about reporting may have an idea of what it might look like that may not reflect reality - although. maybe less so after the Ghomeshi trial outcome.”

“The system doesn’t work. We need to work with women to have realistic expectations and not be invested in a finding of guilty, but in holding him accountable.”

“Things like ICAT and VAWIR committees are a big part in building those important relationships, especially with the RCMP. They know that we understand our role, and that it helps them to have our services.”

“We have a good relationship with RCMP Victim Services, and we’ll call up and talk about the type of officer that might be a good fit for the person coming in, and police-based can often sit in and support them.”

8. CVAP: cost coverage not sufficient based on today’s cost of living, and claims being denied.

Workers expressed concern about low limits to the Crime Victim Assistance Program reimbursements. Others were concerned about claimants being “re-victimized” by high burdens of proof and “callous” rejection letters.

Workers were assured that EVA BC is aware of and concerned about these issues, and will be meeting with representatives from CVAP to address them.

Comments:

“Around clothing and things like that, it’s insufficient to replace what people are claiming.”

“That’s been my experience as well. I find it shocking. It’s almost like you are dealing with an insurance company that does not want to pay out a claim. They are doing what they can to pay the least amount.”

“Also, it needs to be addressed how they respond to people’s applications. Some of the letters back that people get are really re-victimizing. Sometimes I call to advocate for people and feel like I’m being interrogated. It’s almost like they come at it from the opinion that they are lying and that they have to prove they are being honest. It feels very adversarial.”

“Sometimes there were police reports and charges, but no CVAP approved. It can take 8 to 12 months to even get them settled. Some of the waiting times are just not appropriate – really terrible.”

“I spend a lot of time on the phone with CVAP, advocating for women. Why would they lie about something like a sexual assault just to get counselling?”

9. MCFD – Is the approach to child protection working, and if not, what can be done collectively?

Workers expressed confusion about when to report a child in need of protection, and concern that many MCFD staff seemed over-worked and not always accessible to their clients, or cooperative with other professionals.

Callers were referred to MCFD’s Publications webpage for information and resources including [The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect - For Service Providers](#) and the [Child, Family and Community Service Act](#).

Comments:

"I have a client who disclosed there are weapons in the house. He's not threatening her with them, and she's not fearful. However, he is abusive, although it's never been reported to the police. Should I be reporting that? Is that breaching confidentiality?"

"One challenge is that they have a small team and are really overworked. Their ability to stick to agreed upon timelines is an issue."

"If we can work with the social worker, it works better, but it always depends on the social worker."

"With ICAT files, MCFD involvement is often helpful because we are asking for the offender to be addressed as well, and not holding the woman wholly responsible for what's going on."

"There's been a notable change in our local office in terms of collaboration - a definite improvement over the last two years."

"Where there's collaboration, that's where we have success."

"It can be useful to look at their best practices and remind them what their best practices are in meetings. They are receptive."

"We have a lot of turnover, and it's hard to get new social workers into the challenges of our community and to learn how things work around here."

"A lot of times when there is family violence, it seems the onus is almost completely on the mothers just for a lack of services for men. She has to get counselling, find a new place, and do all these things..."

"Social workers are historically reluctant to engage with men, perhaps because they are fearful, because they are violent. So the onus falls on the non-offending parent, usually the woman."

"If I'm confused about my duty to report, I'll call my contact at MCFD and run a 'hypothetical' situation by her for her opinion."

10. Sexual assault responses

Many on the calls were interested in facilitating and participating in coordinated responses to sexual violence in their communities, and curious about how that is in other communities.

Workers were referred to EVA BC's [Community Coordination for Women's Safety Program](#) for information and support around building and strengthening sexual assault protocols. They were also referred to the [BC Women's Hospital Sexual Response Service](#), which has a province-wide mandate, for information, tools and resources for professionals.

Comments:

"The responses a lot of women who come to see us get from police are disappointing to say the least – they are just not being believed."

"I still see a lot of victim blaming. A lot of education needs to be done with police."

"Sexual assault protocols with RCMP, hospital, BC ambulance, MCFD are coming along very well in our community. Being well received. Just a matter of the education piece for first responders."

"We are having a problem with finding trained nurses. Where do we take people? Our local little hospital is not staffed as well as a larger centre an hour away."

"We have a SANE nurse that sits on our VAWIR committee."

"Universities now have to have sexual assault policies. Every community should have to have policies too."

11. Supports for clients experiencing complex trauma, and trauma-informed practice training opportunities

Anti-violence workers continue to struggle to find immediate supports for clients who are experiencing symptoms of complex trauma as a result of gender-based violence. This is particularly true in rural and smaller communities, where there are fewer resources to refer survivors to, or where clients are isolated geographically and find it difficult to access resources. Larger communities experience a huge demand for services such as Stopping the Violence counselling, resulting in waitlists.

As anti-violence workers are often providing support to survivors of trauma they cannot refer quickly to other resources, they feel a need for trauma-informed practice training.

Callers were referred to [Best Practices Manual for Stopping the Violence Programs](#) on the EVA BC website, and to the free NET Continuing Education online training [Vicarious Trauma and Resilience](#) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [Trauma-Informed Approach and Trauma-Specific Interventions](#) webpage.

Comments:

"We are all struggling because the waitlists here are so long. Some agencies and STV counsellors are doing groups, some are doing limited counselling then putting women on the waitlist; some are referring to Mental Health."

"Our STV Program is getting three new referrals a day. They can't keep up."

"CVAP may be an avenue for counselling for women who reported. And it's important to ask women if they have extended benefits."

"We have a lot of practicum students finishing their Masters that will see women for free."

"Collaboration with community partners helps. We ask for help if we are not available. It's all about communication and networking."

“I work in a small community without many resources, and often I’m the ‘only game in town’. If I don’t provide the services, nobody does, so I’m forced to work outside of my mandate and level of expertise.”

12. RCMP responses in rural communities (e.g. primary aggressor)

Workers are still reporting that many police seem unaware of the primary aggressor policy, and women are being arrested in cases of domestic violence where their partners are the primary aggressor. There are instances where women are not taken seriously because they were drinking before the assault.

Callers were referred to the CCWS Backgrounder [Women Being Arrested](#) on the EVA BC website, the RCMP “E” Division’s Primary Aggressor Policy (*Operational Manual Part 2: Criminal Code Offences, persons, violence in relationships: Section 4, primary aggressor*) and the Battered Women’s Support Services Resource, [When Battered Women Are Arrested: A Resource for Frontline Workers](#).

Comments:

“It comes down to the training piece again. Analysis is not being used. I still see it quite a bit.”

“One idea is to ask the police for a copy of their primary aggressor policy. Although I asked in my community, and they never got back to me.”

“I had a client arrested because she had this big burly police officer approach her and she just “shut down”. They considered her non-cooperative and took her in instead of him. By the time I advocated for her, I could see the officer was remorseful, but it was too late because the report was already in.”

“I still see instances where a woman has called police, but she was the one removed, and not her partner.”

“The RCMP are having to make that assessment of where she will be safer – staying at home or at the transition house? Here, they are taking her to the transition house.”

“I’m seeing also that the members are leaving the children at home because they are sleeping, but telling the women to go until things cool down. But if she has him charged she can’t get her kids back because they are at the house and she can’t go there because there is a no contact order. He stays there, because she was removed, or the children have been taken somewhere else, like a grandparent’s house.”

“Women don’t know they can ask to stay and have him go, and the police aren’t telling them.”

“Often there is nowhere for the man to go. Women leave because they have a safe option. Men aren’t asked to leave because they have nowhere to go. It can be increasing risk because he comes back to the house even angrier.”

13. Third Party Reporting for areas that don't have access to any one trained

In some communities, workers have clients who want to make a Third Party Report, but police and/or anti-violence workers aren't aware of or trained in the process.

Workers were referred to the EVA BC website for resources including the 2016 [Third Party Reporting Updated Protocol](#) News Bulletin, the 2015 [Third Party Reporting Guidebook](#), and the 2014 [Third Party Reporting of Sexual Assault](#) Information Bulletin, and informed of our upcoming project to provide more related training across BC.

Comments:

"We don't have CBVS in our community, and the CBVS worker in the next closest town is not doing them. The RCMP are also not trained in how to take them. It's something that we are working on with our sexual assault policy we are trying to put together."

"There's still a lack of awareness around Third Part Reports. But there is information is on the EVA BC website. There's also going to be a webinar."

14. Updated Records Management Guidelines and a Best Practices Manual for Outreach programs

There is a great deal of interest in updated Records Management Guidelines. EVA BC is also receiving requests for a Best Practices Manual for Outreach Programs.

Callers were referred to the EVA BC website for the current version of the [Records Management Guidelines](#), and to the BC Society of Transition House's website for [Technology Safety & Data Privacy Resources](#).

"The current Records Management Guidelines need to be updated to talk more about electronic records, technology safety, and communicating with clients electronically."

"We need a Best Practices Manual for Outreach Programs."

"A manual would be challenging to write, because so much of the work has to do with creativity and responding to the situation. I remember when I first started in this work I thought, 'Oh, now I know how to do that', but it looks different every single time."

15. Monthly reporting.

Workers are concerned that current monthly reporting procedures "miss out" on crucial information that would paint a clearer picture of the work they do. Rural workers in particular feel that the reports do not capture all the services they provide to a client, and how time consuming that may be.

Comments:

“Sometimes when I am doing the monthly online stats, I feel like a big part of the work I do is not being captured. For instance, there’s no question about safety planning, or the amount of time it takes to do certain tasks. In bigger urban areas the numbers are much higher, but they can also make more referrals, whereas I may have lower numbers, but the amount of time spent with a client is greater, because I’m doing everything.”

“Another example is risk assessment. I feel like those things are so important.”

“I just feel like there is so much information that’s not being captured by our funder that speaks to the nature of the work we do, and it makes me concerned, with the open procurement coming up.”

I’m still confused about how to do them properly, and how to accurately reflect the amount of time in a small town that I spend with a client.”

“I use the comments section to add additional information. I make a lot of the same comments.”

“I also write how many safety plans did I create with women. Sometimes if I’m working on a case that requires a lot of time and a lot of research I’ll comment on that - that one session with a woman might be a whole afternoon.”

“I’ll also comment on how much time I’ve been doing research, because in my community we don’t have a lot of resources. I’ll include that in the stats as well.”

“I agree that the STV Outreach stats really feel ridiculous to me sometimes. They just are missing a huge amount of what especially workers in smaller rural communities do.”

“I felt like my reports were never getting read, but then I got feedback from my Program Manager. I thought, ‘Wow, he’s reading them! He’s asking questions.’ Now that I know that he does read them, I don’t just feel like I’m doing reports that go into a void, which is nice. I make more comments.”

16. Safe housing for women who are deemed violent and / or have addiction issues

Workers are reporting difficulties finding a safe place for women with addictions or a history of violence to go to escape abuse. Not every community has a low barrier transition house, and those that do don’t always have beds.

Comments:

“I find that in my community that it is very hard because many of the women who have been abused and are at risk are already on a ‘safety issue’ list and can’t enter a safe house. I don’t know what to do with them. I don’t know how to make them safe.”

“I am in a similar position, and I don’t have any answers. We have one transition house and quite often women refuse to go there, because it’s two hours away. It’s a tricky one.”

“We have a house where women who are using can go, but it’s limited how many women can stay.”

17. Access to services for offenders

EVA BC has been receiving an increasing number of inquiries about services for abusive partners, including inquiries from offenders themselves. There are very few free or low-cost resources for men who want “anger management” who are not court-mandated to take it. Anti-violence workers point out that many of their clients do not want their relationships to end – just the abuse. They are also concerned that their clients miss that narrow window of opportunity when an abuser is remorseful and willing to work on his issues because there were no services available to support him in that.

Comments:

“We are getting calls where men are looking for services, and there’s not much out there.”

“If we don’t address that piece, it’s just a revolving door.”

“For a lot of women, the onus is on them to access services and do all the work, and there’s nowhere for men to go and nothing for them to do.”

“I cannot find services for abusive men in my community. Has any agency received funding?”

“We all know that many abusers were abused themselves, or witnessed abuse. They are victims too.”

18. Access to services for male survivors

Workers from several communities across the province have expressed an interest in providing more services to men, and/or being more welcoming and accessible to male survivors.

Comments:

“I feel like we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg where male survivors are concerned.”

“While I know that many more women than men are victimized, and women fought hard for the services we have, we still can’t ignore that there are male survivors too, and they also need services.”

19. ICAT Referrals and files

While more and more communities are receiving training and setting up ICATs, there remains questions around what an ICAT is, what it does, who sits at the table, what roles they play, how to refer, and the sharing of information.

Workers were referred to EVA BC’s Community Coordination for Women’s Safety program for support and information around setting up and running ICATs,

and to the EVA BC website for the [Interagency Case Assessment Team Best Practices Manual](#) and other ICAT-related resources, including a webinar.

Comments:

“I sit on the ICAT in my community, and am amazed at how each person at the table brings a piece of the puzzle to aid in risk assessment.”

“There is a new ICAT here, and I am still waiting to learn how and when to refer a file to it.”

“There are still some tensions around when to share information, and how much information to share. I sometimes feel pressured to share more about my client than I am comfortable with.”

“There is this grey area in between when the file is brought up for discussion and when it is designated high risk, where I’m not sure if I should be breaking confidentiality.”

“We started putting ‘if a file is designated high risk’ on our Confidentiality Forms as one of the instances in which we would have to break confidentiality.”

20. Collaboration with other services or community resources – how to get key community members involved.

There was consensus among the participants on the calls that collaboration was key to effective anti-violence work. While some communities have well-attended and well-functioning VAWIR, ICAT and similar committees, others struggle to get key players to, or to keep them at, the table.

Workers were advised to consult with EVA BC’s Community Coordination for Women’s Safety program for support and information around collaboration, including relationship building, problem solving and strategic planning.

Comments:

“Crown used to attend our VAWIR committee, and it was very helpful having them there. But now they are just too busy.”

“We have asked our local transition house to sit on the committee, but they are saying privately that there is too much tension between them and the MCFD workers.”

“I sit on our VAWIR committee, but feel guilty about how many meetings I miss. Clients always take priority, and if I have to go to court with a woman, then that’s what I’ll do.”

“We have asked the police repeatedly to come to meetings, but they are short-staffed and often called out to something else.”

21. Court support for children and youth

It was pointed out that there is a great deal of turnover in Community-Based Victim Services, resulting in many workers that are new or relatively new to the field. New workers preparing to witness in court are asking for training and resources.

Callers were referred to the court orientation websites:

www.courtprep.ca/, www.coryscourthouse.ca/, www.courtchoices.ca/, and www.justiceeducation.ca/resources/Lets-Go-To-Court, and offered a 7-page hand-out *Preparing the Child Witness for Court* from an EVA Training Forum presented several years ago. It was also suggested that they work through the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General's *What's My Job in Court?* activity book for child witnesses aged 6 and under.

One caller suggested the National Children's Advocacy Center in Alabama as a good online resource: <http://www.nationalcac.org/>

Comments:

"I have my first child witness file, and I really need to know how best to prepare and support them."

"I think a lot of workers would really appreciate some specific training on working with children and youth. There's nothing out there locally."

"I have worked with a number of children and teenagers, but would like to know if there are things I could be doing better."

22. Police accountability – Need for training

Callers expressed concerns about a perceived lack of training and awareness of the dynamics of gender-based violence in some officers, particularly in less experienced officers, and in remote and rural communities. They also spoke of a lack of cultural sensitivity. They provided examples of officers arresting the female victim instead of the male perpetrator, leaving children with the offender and telling the woman to leave the home, "not taking her seriously" when she discloses relationship abuse, telling women "there is nothing we can do" in cases of criminal harassment, appearing to question a woman's credibility when she reports a sexual assault, telling a sexual assault survivor to "get over it", a lack of awareness around third party reporting, and "victim blaming".

Comments:

"Has anyone any ideas about when the woman wants to report but is still very traumatized and does not want to go in on her own? I have not been allowed in with her. Has anyone been able to accompany a woman?"

"In this district, they do a week on and a week off. If it's a high-risk case, the closest village still takes 45 minutes to get to by boat - time sensitive if they are on their week off. They do the very best they can. But that is just the way things work up here."

“It comes down to the training piece again. I’m still seeing women arrested in cases of domestic violence where he is the primary aggressor. Analysis is not being used. I still see it quite a bit.”

“Some women will not disclose they have been sexually assaulted, as they believe that if it occurs in a marriage, it is not against the law. It’s important for police to be culturally sensitive, so they can ask about sexual assault even if the woman does not bring it up.”

“Other times, the member feels like domestic violence is ‘just part of the culture’, and somehow to be expected.”

23. Victim Services working with offenders

Several Community-Based Victim Services programs reported female accused domestic violence files being referred to them by RCMP Victim Services or community agencies. This can be particularly problematic when working with same-sex couples where both parties report being the victim of the domestic abuse. The book *Violence in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnerships*, edited by Renzetti and Miley, was recommended.

There was consensus that CBVS workers are not mandated to work with criminally charged offenders, and that referring parties should be made aware of that.

Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs

Requested Agenda Items:

1. STV wages and benefits
2. Strategies to manage waitlists, including groups
3. Procurement process/concerns
4. Issues related to rural and remote communities
5. Ethical issues around seeing an ex-STV client in private practice
6. Parenting and co-parenting with an abusive partner
7. Legal resources (or lack thereof) for women who are not on income assistance and/or have some income
8. Working with transgender men and women
9. The need for services for men who have experienced violence
10. Sexual assault responses
11. STV involvement in VAWIR, ICAT, Sexual Assault Response Teams, etc.
12. Narcissism as it pertains to abusive men
13. Alternative forms of healing such as yoga and meditation, etc.
14. Trauma informed trainings and effective methodology
15. Managing the program requirement of 60% direct service to 40% indirect service
16. Clients ordered to get counselling by MCFD

Discussion Around Agenda Items

1. STV Wages and Benefits

Low wages, insufficient benefits and meager or no pensions compared to those doing similar work in the private sector topped the list of concerns for the STV counsellors. They asked that EVA BC play a bigger role in advocating around this very important issue.

Comments:

"A clear comparison is with Mental Health. If I worked there I'd be making at least \$10 an hour more, plus benefits. And they send me the hard clients!"

"My young nephew is working at a relatively unskilled job, and making more money and getting better benefits."

"I don't do this work in a non-profit for the big bucks, but also don't think I should have to worry about what kind of poverty I am going to live in when I get old."

"Most of us have little or no pensions."

"I'm looking at retirement, and that looks like 'aging out' with no pension on the horizon."

"I can't retire, or I will be retiring with no money."

"I can't retire at 65."

"I'm pretty discouraged and pretty disgusted with watching my wages get lower every year."

"It's appalling. What is the mentality when it comes to our programs?"

"Women's wages still aren't the same as men across the board. We have to keep making our voices heard."

"I know EVA has been advocating for years, but there are other strategies we don't talk about. We need noisier strategies. People don't know what is going on. They have no concept of what we are paid. Word should get out to the public."

"We need to think outside of the box. We need to have a brainstorming session and talk about and evaluate ideas."

2. Strategies to manage waitlists, including groups

Almost all of the STV counsellors workers on the calls have waitlists, and are concerned about how best to manage them. Agencies have different ways of prioritizing clients for service, but all are screening for risk factors during intake. There was a great deal of interest in running groups for women who are waiting for counselling, and for training and resources for running groups.

Comments:

"We addressed our 'out of hand' waitlist by offering a 6-day empowerment workshop for women coming in to the program to provide immediate support and information on trauma, and strategies to address trauma symptoms."

"Groups really help with our numbers, and women get service quicker. We've been having a lot of success with them."

"Women with more complex trauma should avail themselves of all resources available, but some can get what they need just from groups. We offer first, second and third stage groups."

"Clients in groups provide support to each other. They feel they are not alone. Those more advanced in their healing gain confidence by supporting others."

"Most women quickly become comfortable with a group setting, even if they are not initially."

"Women in groups learn how to be with other people and how to deal with conflict and difference in a safe place."

"A group really is a good way of picking up those people that otherwise you really just could not pick up. It can also supplement one-on-one appointments."

"I have women in my groups from their 30s to their 70s. A huge thing is that every one in the group is important, and she matters."

"Starting groups seems daunting. I would really like some direction and resources."

"Women at high risk or in crisis go to the top of the list for service, which can push women not in crisis or at high risk farther down on the list."

"We see women on a 'first come/first served' basis, with some prioritizing for urgent need."

"If the initial intake indicates high risk, I refer to our Community-Based Victim Services program immediately for more in depth risk identification and safety planning and support."

"I refer women to the 24-hour crisis line for support while they are on the waitlist."

"Most of our STV referrals are historical. But the crisis could be that they are suicidal or have flashbacks."

"We are partnering with other programs like Outreach and CBVS so they can provide advocacy and accompaniment while women are on the waitlist."

"In smaller areas it's really hard, because you don't always have those support services."

"Some women on the waitlist are flexible, and can be on an 'on call list'. They get called in when someone cancels an appointment. That gives them service, and saves the counsellor's time from being wasted."

"If no support worker is available, I will do an intake and a process (not drop in) group. So the women have met and had contact with me, and can call with urgent issues if they need support."

"I have clients come only once every two weeks to cut down on the waitlist, even though they could benefit from more."

"We used a small surplus from an unpaid leave to see women on the waitlist, for a maximum of 10 to 12 visits each."

"We have addressed our waitlist by seeing women with Crime Victim Assistance funded appointments. That has helped a lot."

"We have a waitlist of 12 to 17 women every month."

"We have seen a surge in referrals. We just had 25 referrals in one month."

"Our demand for service is impacted by season. It's slower in summer."

3. Procurement process/concerns

All STV Counselling programs on the calls also remain very concerned about the upcoming procurement process and the possible impacts on their services. Among these concerns:

- Potential for outsider organizations to bid on contracts (this has been the experience for service providers in other sectors).
- Potential for a loss of services being provided by organizations with feminist perspective.
- Potential for community coordination efforts to be impacted in a negative way.
- Service delivery disruptions.
- Negative impacts on clients.
- The time required to complete the RFP process

EVA BC provided the following update:

- The Ministry is continuing with its regular Program Application process for fiscal year 2016-17 contracts for Victim Service and Violence against Women programs. Contract terms for 2016-17 will be 16 months, running from April 1st, 2016 to July 31st, 2017. Program Application packages have been sent to contracted service providers.
- The MOJ will proceed with plans for open procurement for contracted Victim Service and Violence Against Women Programs beginning in January 2017. This will include contracts in existing service areas at current funding amounts.
- It's expected to take until July 2018 to complete the procurement process.
- The final procurement plan will be released close to the end of 2016.
- In response to feedback from service providers, the Ministry has decided not to proceed with a new funding formula or with the creation of new service areas at this time.
- The Ministry is exploring vendor training opportunities to assist service providers in responding to open procurement.

- Further information on vendor training and procurement timelines will be provided in the coming months.

Callers were referred to the Ministry of Justice's "Procurement of victim Services webpage at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/service-providers/procurement> for more information and to stay updated.

Comments:

"I'm very concerned about the time and financial resources needed to do the RFP, all taken away from direct service."

"I fear we risk losing our funding."

"What is the reasoning behind it?"

"What is 'vendor training'?"

"Taxpayers would be shocked at this waste of tax dollars."

"It's insulting that we have to bid to continue to run the programs we already run, and that we often started."

"It feels unfair that bigger agencies can afford a consultant or staff time to do the application, while smaller agencies do it off the side of their desk, or using volunteers."

"We are service providers – we don't make widgets. This procurement process does not feel like a good fit for the field and what we do."

4. Issues related to rural and remote communities

Service providers in rural and remote communities face additional and different challenges than those working in urban settings. These include the distances clients may have to travel to get to them, the lack of transportation, hazardous driving conditions in the winter months, a lack of internet and sometimes phone service, a lack of other services and resources, a lack of affordable housing, the inability of police to respond quickly, dual relationships, and privacy concerns in a community where everyone is known to each other.

Comments:

"Mine is a large service area – a couple of hundred kilometres. There are no funds for me to drive to meet remote clients. I can sometimes meet them halfway, but many do not have transportation or fuel."

"I arrange appointments with clients over 30 kilometres away on my way home from other appointments."

"Phone connections are just not as effective as face-to-face."

"Clients often call the transition houses in crisis, but don't have access to ongoing counselling support to build their strength."

"My program borrows office space from other agencies in nearby communities to meet women there."

“Does anyone meet clients in their homes?”

“I meet clients in their homes on occasion if there are no safety concerns. Sometimes childcare is an issue. My agency does have a safety procedure.”

“I have an adjoining space with a window, with a computer and Netflix, where children can be seen but not hear.”

“Winter roads conditions can be an issue.”

“I have one client I can only access client by sea plane or water taxi. Sometimes I get a ride on the RCMP boat.”

“Partnerships are a good way to access space and transportation from other agencies. You really must build relationships with community and adjoining communities.”

“My program is mandated to serve communities some distance away. There can be real challenges getting referrals from outlying communities – the can be quite insular. Counsellors seen as ‘outsiders’.”

“Poverty and lack of transportation are real issues with my clients.”

“If women don’t fit my mandate, I still have to see them because no one else can.”

“The privacy piece is a problem. When people see someone walk into an agency they make assumptions about why they are there.”

“Because there are no other services, I may have to see both partners in a same-sex relationship.”

“I may have to refer someone to a program 100 kilometres away. They may not have a vehicle, or a reliable vehicle, or gas for their vehicle.”

“Lack of affordable housing is a real issue for women needing to leave. If they have subsidized housing and improve their conditions, they may lose their subsidy.”

“I work in a tourist destination. Renters are ‘evicted’ for the summer to allow the landlord to rent at higher summer holiday rates.”

“People are living in substandard housing. Some of their living conditions are deplorable, but there is nothing else.”

“Safety planning is an issue. We have only three police cars to cover 250 kilometres. It can be an hour wait. Safety planning can’t be RCMP-based, which is a challenge with ICATs.”

5. Ethical issues around seeing an ex-STV client in private practice

Questions were raised about the ethics of an STV counsellor seeing a client in private practice after she had finished working with her in the STVC program. This is not addressed in the current *STV Best Practices Manual for Stopping the Violence Programs*. The counsellors did not reach consensus on the issue, and requested a best practice be developed.

Comments:

"We're really wrestling with that where I work right now, and trying to come up with a policy around it. What is ethical?"

"What do workers need to agree to when they come into the role?"

"It's a conflict of interest referring to counsellors who are working in the same agency."

"You can't be seen to be gaining personally from your work."

"It's important to avoid dual relationships."

"I think there should be a designated 'cooling off period' before you start doing private work with them."

"Does CVAP add another layer to this? If you assist a client in filling out an application, do they feel like they must then come to you if they are approved?"

"It would be helpful if CVAP would provide a list of certified counsellors in each area."

"It's tricky. We need to develop a best practice around this."

"Seeing a client in your private practice that you saw at your agency is 'muddy waters'. Some STV counsellors would never take an STV client on privately."

"Is it okay to mention your agency in your own website and brochure for your private practice?"

6. Parenting and co-parenting with an abusive partner

The 2013 changes to Family Law putting a greater emphasis on shared guardianship has led to many women who have left abusive partners reporting continued emotional abuse.

Comments:

"I have a client with two small children who is still in an abusive relationship because of co-parenting."

"The new emphasis on shared parenting has created more opportunities for continued abuse, and extended the time that the woman experiences abuse."

"Mom registers kids for an after-school activity like soccer and spends her limited resources, then he won't take them."

"He has more resources to spend on them than her, and uses that to his advantage."

"What can she do when she suspects something he is doing to the kids is abusive? What options does she have? How does she convince the Ministry? The Ministry often says 'That's about custody – take it to court'."

"The focus is not always on the best interests of the child. A big frustration is when he is not abusive, but not nice, and the children don't want to go and you have to make them go."

“One of my client’s ex is co-sleeping with a 5 and a 9-year-old and his new girl friend, despite mom saying it’s not appropriate.”

“A lot of my clients report that their children are acting out when they get home.”

“Advise women to make notes of specific things they notice, but there is so little they can do. They are held accountable for keeping the kids safe, yet are not always able to do so.”

7. Legal resources (or lack thereof) for women who are not on income assistance and/or have some income

STV counsellors share CBVS and Outreach workers frustration that so few of their clients fleeing abuse qualify for Legal Aid. As mentioned earlier in this report, EVA BC receives frequent calls and emails from workers looking for resources for their clients who don’t qualify for Legal Aid, but can’t afford a lawyer. They are seeing a great many women who are forced to represent themselves in Family Court. Their situation is often exacerbated by their partner having more financial means than they have, and therefore being able to afford a lawyer, or a better lawyer, and /or more hours of a lawyer’s time.

Callers were referred to the Legal Services Society “Family Law in BC” webpage at <http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/> for more information [Legal Aid](#) and family law, and to LSS’s new mylawbc.com website.

Comments:

“Lots of women can’t get Legal Aid, but can’t afford a lawyer.”

“Women in crisis find it difficult to work with online resources, especially those women with children.”

“There are lots of clients who can’t afford internet or cell minutes.”

“Our agency built a partnership with a local lawyer who will do a \$100 1-hour consult to get women started.”

“UBC law students can sometimes help.”

8. Working with transgender men and women

There was discussion around how many agencies still don’t have a clear policy or best practices around working with a transgender woman and men, and the need for policy and/or direction.

Callers were referred to the website of the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC) at www.algbtic.org/, and to the Vancouver Coastal Health’s Transgender Health Program resource [Counselling and Mental Health Care of Transgender Adults and Loved Ones](#).

Comments:

“Agencies don’t always have clear policies around working with a transgendered client.”

“It’s important to be prepared instead of to just wait until it happens. We tend not to think of these things.”

“It’s really important to have a policy around this, especially for a transition house.”

Some co-workers I’ve asked say they would not work any differently with a transgendered woman than a cis woman. That sounds a little simplistic to me.”

“How would their needs be different? We need to think about this in order to best work with them.”

“My thinking is, ‘This is a person who has real struggles, and I am going to work with her’.”

“Transgendered people are being targeted as both women and as ‘other’, and being victims of both gender-based violence and hate crimes.”

9. The need for services for men who have experienced violence

As described earlier in this report, anti-violence workers, survivors of abusive relationships, and on occasion abusers frequently contact EVA BC looking for counselling, support groups, “anger management” and other resources for abusive partners. If the abuser does not have financial means or extended benefits, or is not court-mandated, there are very few resources we can refer to.

Comments:

“There’s a huge need. Women often come in and ask ‘How come there’s no programs for him? I don’t need fixing; he needs fixing.’”

“There is often an overlap between men who experience abuse, and men who perpetuate it.”

“No agency in my community has a mandate to work with abusive men that I know of.”

“Our agency offers men’s programming four days a week, for couples, family and men alone. We work to unpack the relationship issues that may lead to violence.”

“Our men’s program is successful, and has quite a waitlist. Men have to agree that the woman will be consulted. Men who don’t ‘buy in’ are not good candidates and are not accepted.”

“Have any communities secured funding long term?”

“A piece of our men’s programming is funded, and the rest is fundraised by the agency.”

10. Sexual assault responses

As mentioned earlier in this report, many anti-violence workers are concerned about what appears to be a lack of understanding of the impacts of sexual assault in the legal system in the wake of the recent comments made by Alberta's Judge Robin Camp (he berated the complainant and asked her why she didn't "just keep her knees together") when he acquitted Scott Wagar of sexual assault, and the Ghomeshi sexual assault trial and decision. They are calling for trauma-informed training for Crown and the judiciary.

Comments:

"The challenge for me is how to help a woman decide whether or not to proceed through a criminal court process, and how to support her through that process."

"That's even more challenging in light of the Ghomeshi trial. A lot of women were impacted by what went on in the media."

"EVA's press release about the Ghomeshi case was really helpful in responding to questions."

"The reality is that convictions are really unlikely, and the process is damaging for women."

"The information on third party reporting is really helpful."

"The system is so black and white that it fails many survivors. For example, I am working with a woman who suspects that she was sexually assaulted, but was asleep. What are her options?"

11. STV involvement in VAWIR, ICAT, Sexual Assault Response Teams, etc.

There was discussion about STV counsellors sitting on community coordination committees or teams such as Violence Against Women in Relationship Committees (VAWIR), Interagency Case Assessment Teams to determine high risk cases (ICATs), or Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART). Some STV counsellors have been encouraged by their communities and organizations to sit on such teams and committees, and others discouraged.

Counsellors were referred to EVA BC's Community Coordination for Women's Safety program and to the EVA BC website for support and information around community coordination and ICATs, such as [Critical Privacy Sharing Provisions Which Impact Information Sharing In Woman Abuse Cases](#), the [Interagency Case Assessment Team Best Practices Manual](#), [Step by Step: Tools for Developing a Coordinated Response to Violence Against Women](#), and [High Risk Cases of Violence Against Women in Relationships: Collaborative Safety Planning](#).

Comments:

"I've heard that some STV workers getting feedback that they should not be on such committees or teams. Yet it seems like a natural fit for STV."

"I sit on the VAWIR committee in my community, and have for some time."

"I am the co-chair of our VAWIR committee."

"I'm involved with our local Sexual Assault Team."

"I have been at the ICAT table if it concerns my client."

"It's a resource issue for me to do committee work, as it takes away time from client time."

"I think it depends on who else from agency goes, and if there's a women-serving agency at the table."

"I still have questions about sharing information with an ICAT. For example, when do I share information on breaches? When does safety trump privacy?"

"I will share 'need to know information that pertains to the woman's safety and her children's safety, but not irrelevant details such as events from her childhood."

"I know many communities are getting ICAT training. Does the Best Practices Manual set out specific guidelines for referrals?"

"It's helpful to be at the ICAT table because I don't think the police are asking the right questions and doing a thorough risk assessment."

12. Narcissism as it pertains to abusive men

There was discussion about the number of clients whose description of their abusers and their behaviours indicate the abusers have a narcissistic personality disorder. One of the challenges is that women spend a great deal of time and energy trying to get their abuser to change, but narcissists are very resistant to change.

Comments:

"I've had a lot of clients who have been in, or are in, a relationship with a narcissist."

I hand clients the DSM for narcissistic personality disorder and let them read it, and they go, 'Oh my God, that's him!'"

"It's hard for a woman to extricate herself because he can be so manipulative, skilled at controlling, and charming in public."

"Everything can look so good on the outside."

"Narcissistic men are not open to changing, so there's not a lot of treatment available."

"If somebody doesn't think there's a problem, they are not going to change."

"They are like Jeckyl and Hyde. They have a good side and a bad side, and it's crazy-making for the woman to try and figure out which is real."

"I work with a woman to engage in facts, and engage with rational thought and not her emotional mind to see the situation more clearly."

13. Alternative forms of healing such as yoga and meditation, etc.

There was discussion about using, or recommending clients use, alternative forms of healing to treat trauma-related symptoms and reactions, such as yoga and meditation. Several callers expressed an interest in specific trainings on alternative methods.

“Lori Haskell said at a recent training that some of the most effective alternative therapies for trauma are acupuncture, meditation, yoga and massage.”

“Neurofeedback is also effective to learn how to train your own brain to attain a optimal level of arousal and self regulation.”

“Muse headbands use a similar technology, but it’s not as accurate. One issue is if you need to add it to the consent form to use it with clients.”

“I really recommend the book, ‘The Body Keeps the Score’ by Bessel Van der Kolk. He talks about the range of approaches you need to take, and the methods he finds useful.”

“At my agency, volunteers come in and offer yoga and massage and reflexology to clients. Women can sign up as often as they want to. We have found that really helpful for women.”

“It’s important to be careful about not referring to practitioners out in the community without a clear sense of who the person is, and what their boundaries are.”

“As much as anything else, it’s the relationships we build with our clients that contribute to much of the healing – that safe attachment.”

14. Trauma informed trainings and effective methodology

Counsellors also expressed frustration with a lack of free or low-cost training, and inadequate professional development budgets.

“Other counselling programs funded by other branches of government like MCFD seem to have bigger pockets, or place more of a priority on training. Their staff have more training opportunities.”

“I really benefitted from the EMDR training EVA presented a few years ago. I would like to see that happen again.”

“I would like more training around eating disorders, and obesity as an eating disorder related to trauma.”

“I feel a need for training on working with women who are developmentally delayed and have been sexually abused. All of them have different capacities. What will work for one won’t necessarily work with another.”

“I would like more training on childhood-based sexual abuse and working with adult survivors.”

“The three-day Working With Survivors of Recent Sexual Assault training was really good. I appreciated the opportunity to practice skills on the third day.”

15. Managing the program requirement of 60% direct service to 40% indirect service

There was discussion around whether or not most STV counsellors were able to consistently adhere to the required 60/40 ratio of direct service to non-direct service but related work. It was clarified that direct service includes intakes, individual and group sessions, preparation for group sessions, telephone and email support, debriefing, writing case notes, travel to see clients, and advocacy on a client's behalf. Indirect service is staff and agency meetings, public speaking and education, community coordination, supervision, training and professional development, and self care activities.

Comments:

"It's hard to do the 60-40 split without organizational support."

"I've been told to aim for a 70-30 split."

"In rural communities, case work is often higher than 60%, because you're the only game in town."

"Don't forget that the 40% includes networking, public relations, and community work. That's where committees like VAWIR and ICAT come in."

"It's hard to fit travel, planning, advocacy and case notes into the 60% direct service. I feel like I'm expected to be carrying a higher caseload."

"Self care is in the 40%. It's important to attend to our own needs."

"I end up doing self care and professional development things like reading on my own time, in order to see more clients."

16. Clients ordered to get counselling by MCFD

STV counsellors are reporting a growing number of women being mandated to get counselling by MCFD again as a result of domestic violence. Many of these mandated women are very upset to be told there is a waitlist, as they fear losing guardianship of their children. Others are accepted into counselling but are resentful, reluctant, or even "resistant". There are concerns that these mandated MCFD referrals are adding to already long STV waitlists, and perhaps taking hours from women who are ready and willing to get counselling.

Comments:

"How are others managing clients that are mandated by MCFD to the program, but may not want to come?"

"Are we obligated to work with women mandated by MCFD?"

"Women are being told that if they do not get counselling, their children will be removed."

"Many mandated women are resistant, and have no desire to be there."

“I have conversations with the Ministry and my clients about how I do not ‘enforce’ a mandate. I will not report back to the Ministry without my client’s permission.”

“It’s a full-time job trying to manage MCFD referrals.”

“I try to build a relationship with a resistant client. I’ll ask, ‘What does MCFD need that we can work on to help you in this situation?’”

“Women need to self refer to my program. We may not know that the Ministry referred them until we meet them.”

“We will provide women sent by MCFD a letter saying they are on a waitlist if we can’t get them in right away.”