

ENDING VIOLENCE

Association of BC

2017 Regional Teleconferences Report

**Community-Based Victim Services Programs
Stopping the Violence Outreach Programs
Multicultural Outreach 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 April 18th and 27th, 2017. Each call was two hours long. In total, 109 workers registered for these calls.

The 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 by participants upon pre-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.

The following report is a summary of the main topics and issues that came up in the Community-Based Victim Service workers and Stopping the Violence Outreach and Multicultural Outreach worker calls, and highlights of the discussions that took place.

I. EVA BC UPDATES

Callers were informed of the recent staff updates at the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG):

- Marcie Mezzarobba is the new Executive Director, Victim Services and Crime Prevention
- Rosalind Currie is the new Director of Community Programs/OCTIP, and
- Ally Butler is new Director of Policy, Victim Services and Crime Prevention

Teleconference call participants were also provided with the following brief updates on key EVA BC services, resources and initiatives:

1. ONGOING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR PROGRAMS

Teleconference call participants were reminded that EVA BC continues to provide support on a daily basis to its almost 230 member programs, including our toll-free help and information line, multiple listservs, newsletters, bulletins, backgrounders, EVA Notes, and the new Resource of the Month. We also provide as many trainings as we can find funding and opportunities for.

A. Listservs

This member benefit continues to provide a vital forum for discussion and information sharing among CBVS, Community Coordination Initiatives and STV Outreach/Multicultural Outreach and STV Counselling Programs, Indigenous programs and Executive Directors across BC.

The listservs are moderated by EVA BC staff, who monitor the content of the postings and proactively send out relevant updates and information. EVA BC members can join the listservs by signing up on our website.

B. Email

Not all programs are signed up on the listservs so we also communicate with programs via email as well.

C. Website

Our website, www.endingviolence.org, contains a wealth of resources and information for anti-violence workers, including guides and manuals, newsletters and bulletins, EVA Notes, and information on our programs and gender-based violence. We average almost 50,000 visits per month.

D. Social Media: EVA BC is active on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

E. Surveys: EVA also develops and distributes an annual survey to all programs in the province. The last one was sent in March, 2017.

Survey questions were:

1. Service Demands – what changes (if any) are programs experiencing, what are the trends and what are the contributing factors; what strategies are programs using to manage changes in service demand.
2. Sexual Assault Response – specific initiatives and/or coordination activities programs are involved in locally and regionally; experience with Third Party Reporting, including awareness and usage of updated protocols and TPR Guidebook (released November 2015).
3. Women Mistakenly Arrested (i.e. – are police following the primary aggressor policy in domestic violence cases.)

F. New Resources:

CCWS Newsletters and Bulletins:

- *Third Party Reporting Protocol Enhancement* (March 2017)
- *Backgrounder: Third Party Reporting for Survivors Under 19* (Feb 2017)
- *Notice: Amendment to Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act Regarding Domestic Violence* (Oct. 2016)
- *Backgrounder: Disclosing Information in Women Abuse Cases* (Dec. 2016)
- *Also planned - an Information Bulletin to address knowledge gaps regarding in-custody protection orders to keep women free from contact by the offender while he is incarcerated.*

EVA Notes - This series of two-page briefing notes is intended to inform anti-violence workers on timely and complex issues. EVA Notes is distributed through the listservs and available on our website. Topics covered since the last teleconference calls include:

- *Bystander Education and Training* (July 2016)
- *When Disasters Strike* (August 2016)
- *Gender-Based Needs Assessment* (July 2016)
- *Advancing Gender Equality* (February 2017)
- *Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence* (March 2017)

Revised ICAT Best Practices Manual - The second edition of the *ICAT Best Practices Manual* includes significant changes to sections on privacy legislation, informed consent, file storage, file disclosure, member roles and responsibilities, transfer of files between communities and record keeping. MCFD has updated language on sharing of information and the link between ICAT and VAWIR policy has been made clearer.

Western Canada Sexual Assault Initiative (WCSAI) Resources - A number of resources were created as part of the WCSAI that wrapped up in May 2016. All were sent to all programs and can be found on our website:

- *Sexual Assault Support Worker Handbook (updated)*
- *Campus Sexual Violence: Guidelines for a Comprehensive Response*
- *Sexual Assault Disclosure Response Tips*
- *Sexual Assault Information Pamphlets in different languages*

2016 Regional Teleconferences Report - A 37-page summary of discussions that took place on the four teleconference calls held in May 2016 for STV Counsellors, Stopping the Violence Outreach and Multicultural Outreach workers, and Community-Based Victim Services workers.

Newsletters:

- *Spring and Fall Newsletters*
- *February 2017 EVA-E-News*

A spring print newsletter is in the works. It will feature an article by Dr. Margaret Jackson and retired BC Supreme Court Judge, The Honourable Donna Martinson, that highlights their recently published research on family violence and information sharing between family and criminal courts.

2. UPDATES ON TRAINING, PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

A. TRAININGS:

Annual Training Forum: #OurTimelsNow - the EVA BC Annual Training Forum 2016 took place in Richmond on November 24 & 25, 2016. Legal Services Society of BC partnered with us on this event. Over 300 people attended from across the province – primarily anti-violence workers, but also representatives from police, health, justice, government and academia. 2016 Keynote Speeches from the Training Forum are available on the EVA TV page at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLs3LiiUL_7XT_6nFdZPeTVRaq3pRHSyAC.

Be More Than a Bystander School Trainings

Be More Than a Bystander conducted almost 50 presentations in schools province-wide, including remote communities. Ex BC Lion JR LaRose has become a very popular speaker, particularly in Indigenous communities, increasing the already strong demand for presentations.

Indigenous Be More Than a Bystander Presentations

Eight Be More than A Bystander Presentations were tailored to and delivered In Indigenous Communities.

Other Be More Than a Bystander Trainings: UBC, SFU, BCIT, and Quest University (Squamish) all received either Be More Than a Bystander trainings, or training on best practices for dealing with campus sexual assault.

Safe Choices Workshops

Our Safe Choices program delivered over a dozen workshops about healthy LGBTQ2S relationships and LGBTQ2S women's experiences. in the 2016-17 fiscal year, primarily for service providers who work in the anti-violence field, victim services, social services, and health care settings.

Working with Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: Understanding the Neurobiology of Trauma

EVA BC arranged this well-attended two-day training with Dr. Lori Haskell, offering a discounted rate for member programs.

Community Coordination for Women's Safety Trainings

See below under "EVA BC Programs".

B. EVA BC PROGRAMS:

1. Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS)

CCWS helps BC communities develop new models and improving existing models of cross-sector coordination on violence against women. CCWS delivered the following trainings:

- ICAT Best Practices
- Developing a Collaborative Response to Domestic Violence
- Best Practices in Coordinated Responses to Sexual Violence
- Building and Supporting VAWIR Committees
- Coordinating Sexual Assault Responses
- Domestic Violence Risk Identification, Tools and Techniques
- Forum for Domestic Violence Unit Partnerships
- Third Party Reporting in Cases of Adult Sexual Assault
- ICAT: Updated Best Practices and Information Sharing Parameters
- Information Sharing and Privacy Rights
- Risk Identification and Safety Planning for Indigenous Communities

Other CCWS activities included:

VAWIR Committee Conference Calls - CCWS facilitates two conference calls each year for coordination committees throughout the province.

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. The Working Group membership represents a broad range of system- and community-based sectors who share their expertise and act as liaisons between their sector and CCWS. The group began meeting in November 2001.

Community Support - The CCWS Regional Coordinators and Legal Analyst provide ad hoc consultation, support, referrals, training and resource materials to communities throughout the province on an ongoing basis to help build coordinated, cross sector responses. This support takes the form of one-on-one telephone calls, group teleconference calls, email support, mailing of resource materials and in-person meetings/trainings when feasible.

2. Be More Than a Bystander

This is the sixth year for our Be More Than a Bystander program, a groundbreaking partnership between the BC Lions and EVA BC that sees sports icons from the BC Lions using their status and public profile to create awareness and urge everyone to “Break the Silence on Violence Against Women”.

Three new public service announcements have been airing in-stadium at all BC Lions home games and are available on the EVA TV YouTube channel, along with two messaging videos developed especially for schools.

In the past year we have engaged with communities throughout BC through over 40 in-person school and community presentations; about half of these communities were rural or remote. As of September 2016, the total public reach since the program began was almost 400 million impressions.

A partnership with the BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour and Encana Corporation resulted in the launch of EVA BC's new training film, *Become More Than Bystanders: Ending Violence Against Women in Resource Industry Workplaces*, in the spring of 2016. The 30-minute video offers the Be More Than a Bystander model as an effective way to prevent violence against women in the workplace. (<http://endingviolence.org/prevention-programs/be-more-than-a-bystander/anti-violence-workplace-training-resources/>).

EVA BC launched the first annual Be More Than a Bystander Awards at the EVA BC Annual Training Forum in November 2016. This award honours dedicated community members who make outstanding contributions to ending gender-based violence by speaking up, interrupting and confronting harmful language and behaviour within their community, and who demonstrate courage in opposing gender-based violence. The award is an important continuation of the Tony McNaughton Award for bravery in opposing violence, established by the Ending Relationship Abuse Society of BC (ERA BC) in 2004. The first two recipients were high school student Eric Miranda, and anti-violence worker and advocate Melinda Mack.

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

3. Safe Choices Program

The Safe Choices Support and Education Program focuses on improving the health and safety of women who are currently or have been in abusive same-sex/gender relationships by empowering women, and by strengthening our communities to respond to this issue.

Our use of the term “women” includes transgender/transsexual women. While the primary focus of the program is lesbian, bisexual, queer, Two-Spirit and trans women, we work to be inclusive of people with various gender identities, as well as gay men in some circumstances.

Safe Choices provides 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, victim services, social services and health care settings. The program is funded by Vancouver Coastal Health, and training is free in the Vancouver area. Fee for service training are available elsewhere.

4. Indigenous Communities Safety Project (ICSP)

The Indigenous Communities Safety Project provides knowledge sharing to Aboriginal leadership in Indigenous communities related to criminal justice, family justice and child protection. The purpose is to empower Indigenous 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.

The new Coordinator Michelle Buchholz has been editing and making updates to the curriculum and presentation materials. This has allowed the integration of the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report on the residential school system and subsequent 94 Calls to Action. It has also allowed for the inclusion of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

5. BC Missing Women's Network

EVA BC continues to partner with the RCMP "E" Division's BC Missing Persons Center and the Surrey Women's Centre to run a province-wide BC Missing Women Network. The primary intentions of the BC Missing Women Network are to:

- Locate women and children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence that could result in serious bodily harm or death.
- 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.
- Stop alleged abusive partners from exploiting police resources to find and gain access to women fleeing abusive relationships.
- 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.

Police from across the province provide notices of missing women to EVA BC, who 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.

In keeping with the spirit of locating missing women, the mandate of the Missing Women Network's mandate was expanded to include the occasional circulation of descriptions of women whose remains have been located, but have yet to be identified. These descriptions include information about hair colour, clothing, distinctive marks, tattoos, etc., and where and when the remains were located. It is hoped that service providers in women-serving agencies may recognize a past client that they or a colleague worked with - possibly one who quit coming to appointments or to access services unexpectedly.

The Network will also begin to fan out bulletins of historical "cold" cases of missing women. It is hoped that this expansion of the Network mandate can help to return these unidentified women to their loved ones, so that they may provide them an appropriate resting place, and gain some much-needed closure.

6. Melissa Chatham Memorial Fund

On September 21, 2008, 24-year-old Melissa Chatham was tragically taken from her family and friends in an act of violence. At the request of the Chatham family, EVA BC has set up a memorial fund in honour of Melissa's life. EVA BC continues to feature the Melissa Chatham Memorial Fund on our website in the "Donate Now" page. Donations are used to support other young women across BC who face violence in their relationships.

We were contacted by Melissa Chatham's stepmother about a dragon boat for survivors including family members, survivors, and advocates, Warriors on Water. Warriors on Water honours Melissa's memory, and also provides the support for survivors. We are assisting them by providing web pages for them on the EVA BC website.

C. MISCELLANEOUS PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Some of the projects and activities that EVA BC worked on over the year that may be of interest to our programs are:

BC Campus Sexual Assault Project

This new project was funded by a CFO grant from the Province of BC, involving project partners from secondary education campuses and the anti-violence programs in four communities across BC. As well, EVA BC has been participating in consultations with the Ministry of Advanced Education on proposed response by universities and colleges to sexual assault on campus on an ongoing basis.

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative for Vulnerable Populations

EVA BC is one of more than 40 community service organizations, government departments, and universities who have joined together to better understand and address domestic homicide through the creation of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative for Vulnerable Population (CDHPVP). The 5-year national project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and focuses on risk assessment, risk management, and safety planning to prevent domestic homicides and will focus on four vulnerable populations. EVA BC will be working closely with researchers and other partners from across the country, including the FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children (Simon Fraser University).

Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA CAN)

The CFL announced its Policy on Violence Against Women in August 2015. Under the policy, teams are mandated to receive annual training on violence against women. The CFL negotiated with EVA CAN to develop training for all the CFL teams, and EVA CAN contracted EVA BC to do the work.

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.

Research Project with BC Women's Hospital

We are involved in a new research project with BC Women's Hospital – *Changing Perceptions: Reimagining Sexual Assault to Better Support Survivors*. This is funded by the Vancouver Foundation.

Immigration Work Team

Ongoing liaison with Vancouver Police Department, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Children and Family Development to find solutions to the issue of sponsorship debt accrued by abused women.

Assaultive Men's Treatment Program Evaluation

EVA BC is involved in the development phase of this new project, assisting with the evaluation plan, to evaluate programs receiving MPSSG funding for assaultive men's treatment services through their *Supporting Healthy Relationships* initiative.

DAWN Canada

We are on new national committee with DAWN Canada; they have funding for a multi-year project regarding awareness of women with disabilities/violence.

Disability Alliance BC (DABC)

EVA BC is working with DABC on a project to develop videos and fact sheets for survivors of gender-based violence who are living with disabilities.

The Justice Robin Camp Inquiry

EVA BC participated in the coalition of women's organizations that was been granted intervener status in the Justice Robin Camp inquiry, along with the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, the IAAW - Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, METRAC (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children), West Coast LEAF, and LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund).

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative for Vulnerable Populations (CDHPVP)

EVA BC is participating in this national project led by researchers at Western and the University of Guelph in Ontario. The 5-year national project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and focuses on risk assessment, risk management, and safety planning to prevent domestic homicides and will focus on four vulnerable populations.

Canadian Judicial Conference

EVA BC Executive Director Tracy Porteous co-delivered a presentation, *From Harassment to Homicide*, to approximately 175 provincial court judges at the Canadian Judicial Conference.

Canadian Chiefs of Police

Tracy Porteous was a member of a sub-committee of the Canadian Chiefs of Police to help them develop a national framework on police investigations into Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

II. COMMUNITY-BASED VICTIM SERVICES AND STOPPING THE VIOLENCE OUTREACH AND MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH PROGRAMS TELECONFERENCE CALLS SYNOPSIS

Requested Agenda Items:

(NOTE: These agenda items were requested by the programs prior to the calls. Similar items from both calls have been combined to avoid repetition.)

1. High caseloads and lack of funding
2. Procurement
3. CVAP trends and concerns
4. How are Highest Risk and ICAT committees being done in different communities?
5. Helping clients find affordable housing and emergency shelter
6. Accessing legal help for Family Court, and supports for immigrant women
7. Accessing dental and prescription help
8. Navigating court in rural settings
9. Critical issues and challenges faced by programs (and clients)
10. Family Court – shift to 50/50 parenting time
11. How does the recent Trauma Informed Practice Conference information trickle down to local police, Crown Counsel and Judges?
12. Training
13. Counselling and support programs for men
14. Elder abuse and abuse of older women
15. Supporting sex assault survivors/drug-facilitated sexual assaults
16. Confidentiality. What information can we share with whom?
17. Obligation to report regarding minors at significant risk of harm
18. Maintaining community coordination for safety in relationship committees
19. Referrals from RCMP Victim Services
20. Use of technology to Skype or FaceTime with rural clients
21. Challenges around enforcement and accountability in relation to abusers breaching their conditions of release
22. Judges allowing representation/non-representation in court
23. Complexities of mental health/addictions/resources and waitlists
24. Working with LGBTQ2S clients
25. Concerns with women being wrongfully arrested
26. Service pressures and funding

Discussion Around Agenda Items

1. High Caseloads and Lack of Funding

There was discussion about how the number of files workers are carrying, and the complexity of many of those files, is continuing to grow, but funding has not. Workers are struggling to meet with clients in a timely manner, and to be able to spend enough time with clients to provide all the needed services.

Comments:

“Why is the Ministry not being challenged to tie funding to current census records?”

“What we’re having to do now, is that when a client calls, we have to book her for the next week. That can be very difficult, because by the time we reach next week, the woman may have changed her min. It’s very important to get to that woman at that moment.”

“It’s a safety issue for many women.”

“Because of lack of funding and a high workload, it’s been very, very difficult.”

2. Updates to Procurement

All programs remain very concerned about the any plans government has relating to any 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 negatively.
- Service delivery disruptions.
- Negative impacts on clients.
- The time that would be required to complete the RFP process

EVA BC advised that there has no significant updates on procurement since November of 2016. MPSSG are not proceeding with general open procurement activities for contracted victim services and violence against women programs at this time, and have extended current contracts through March 31st, 2018. MPSSG is now awaiting direction from the new government post-election, and predict there will be no news until the fall of 2017.

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, and to their MPSSG Program Manager for information around their specific contracts.

Comments:

"That information did go out to the contract holders, but does not always filter down to the frontlines."

"Are we still letting the Ministry know what we see as all the pros and cons around procurement, and focusing on the programs that need additional resources?"

"Just because this has been on the table for a long time and it's on hold doesn't mean we can forget about it. It's potentially a major issue."

3. CVAP Trends and Concerns

Callers expressed concerns about claims of sexual assault survivors not being approved because of a lack of corroborating evidence, non-trauma-informed language in letters from CVAP to applicants (in particular letters informing them that their claims were not approved), the possibility of CVAP pursuing a civil claim against an offender to recoup costs putting claimants at risk, a lack of knowledge of CVAP policies, delays in accessing emergency support such as accommodation, delays in decisions being made, and clients having to go through a "re-application process" if they do not access their awarded counselling within six months.

Comments:

"The concern I and my client had (and I think what other VS workers were voicing) is that CVAP seems to be approving claims based on RCMP records. For example, if RCMP files suggest that there may have been consent, but information from counsellor or other sources suggest otherwise, the opinion of RCMP information has greater weight in the CVAP decision. I can attest that I often hear from victims that RCMP and Crown Counsel are not proceeding on a file because they 'don't believe the victim or they have told the victim that it will be impossible to prove what they say', not that the crime did not occur."

"One thing that we've noticed in [my community] is women that have had historical sexual abuse are not getting approved by CVAP because of the lack of evidence and people backing up their story. If they're not getting access to Crime Victim Assistance, that makes it very difficult for them to get access to counselling. Most of the time when there's historical sexual abuse, it's extremely

damaging to their life, and so they don't have the best coping strategies, and don't have access to jobs and benefits. They are not getting access to Stopping the Violence Counselling as quickly as other women as the abuse happened a long time ago, and their need is not seen as immediate."

"I think it would be important to look at the government making important changes to the legislation of CVAP to address the fact that power based crimes often do not have crime verifying data or witnesses making a claim to CVAP highly likely to be denied."

"The letters from CVAP need to be in simpler English. My clients have to bring them to me to ask me what they mean."

"The language of the letters notifying women that their claims are not approved is not trauma-sensitive, and is 're-victimizing'. Sometimes they are alone when they open these letters, and they are traumatized."

"The CVAP release form includes a place for clients to initial that they agree that CVAP can civilly sue the 'offender' to reclaim monies paid out for the victim's counselling, etc. Since our clients are usually the victims of a power-based crime it seems dangerous that CVAP may do this; it could increase her risk. Do you know if CVAP takes this in to account?"

"I really like the idea of having a separate CVAP-type program just for power-based crimes. A system that assumes women are telling the truth, and not lying."

"I have two recent files that there was no decision on for over a year. One was just resolved when I sent a letter on behalf of the client, and the other one I am now drafting a letter for."

"I have been seeing a pattern of clients trying later to use counselling that they were awarded, and almost having to go through a re-application if they didn't go for counselling within the first six months after the award was given. Apparently, it's a policy they have. We need a memo or bulletin or something from CVAP so we can forewarn clients. What I'm doing now is I'm letting clients know that once they get an award, it's really important they activate it no later than in the first six months."

"There hasn't been a lot of training around CVAP."

4. How are Highest Risk and ICAT Committees Being Done in Different Communities?

There was discussion about the membership, format, and function of the various high risk and ICAT committees operating across the province. All of the participants said that their community had some type of high risk committee in

operation. Many of the programs work closely with their community's police Domestic Violence Unit or Domestic Violence Officer.

Comments:

"We have weekly meetings with our Domestic Violence Unit. That's the detectives, the victim service worker, MCFD, and sometimes Probation is there. If they see a case, or someone has called the Unit with a concern, they can have it put on the list for the weekly review. They review the case and decide if they are going to take that file on. If they don't, they notify whoever asked them to assess that case, and explain the reasons why. And then we have what we call the high-risk meetings once a month. That basically is Crown, police, MCFD, Victim Services, Mental Health, Probation, and the odd time there might be somebody else who's involved on the case. They bring forward the cases that have been identified as high risk, and there's a discussion about where things are at on those cases and any issues that need to be addressed. We don't have an ICAT."

"We have meetings once a month, and cases can be brought up, and then we just kind of see what is going on with them. If there's a need or something changes, that's when we call the ICAT, and everyone gets together within the day. Those don't happen very often. If we are working with a client that we are concerned about, it can be really helpful to find out who else is working with them and get a bit more information."

"We have a Domestic Violence Unit. We actually meet once a week, because we're trying to really put out to service providers to contact us immediately. If it's something of imminent danger, then our domestic violence investigator and our CBVS team will work right away to try to meet the needs and identify the risk factors with an emergency safety appointment. It's really beneficial to be doing these meetings once a week to be so we are on top of the highest risk individuals. We actually haven't had an ICAT probably since the fall, and we are on the same page with the domestic violence investigators that that means we are doing a good job. We don't want ICATS – we want to be meeting needs immediately, and assessing situations and holding offenders accountable. At our domestic violence unit meetings, it's Community Victim Services, the domestic violence investigator from the RCMP, MCFD and Probation. It's been really, really beneficial. I think it's because we have been accountable as service providers that we don't need to go to an ICAT."

"My [CBVS] co-worker and the domestic violence officer are primarily involved with the ICAT. What happens is the domestic violence officer alerts the chair of the ICAT to gather everyone together – it could be Probation, MCFD, obviously community based, RCMP... That meeting is set up within a couple of hours, and there's a synopsis of what has happened and why it's high risk, and then each provider is delegated what they need to do to ensure the safety of this person."

Also, the domestic violence officer, the other service providers and community-based get together every six to eight weeks and review all the ICATs from the last few months. Also, the domestic violence officer and the community-based worker get together once a week and review all the domestic files. We were trained very well. Everyone's on board, and it seems to be working very well."

"We get alerted by [our community's] domestic violence officer to set up the meetings, usually a couple of weeks ahead of time. All the community partners like Probation, MCFD, victim services, transition house counsellors attend to do the risk assessment and to come up with a plan. It's kind of as-needed."

5. Helping Clients Find Affordable Housing and Emergency Shelter

The affordable housing crisis comes up repeatedly as a major barrier to clients attempting to escape abusive relationships province-wide, and every participant on the call reported that it is a serious problem in their community. Clients are remaining in abusive relationships or returning to their abusers because there is simply no place for them to go. Some are living in sub-standard housing. Clients are also staying longer in transition houses because they cannot find affordable housing, making fewer beds available to others trying to leave their abusers.

Several callers reported that they are frequently unable to find a transition house bed for clients needing to escape violence, even in surrounding communities.

Some clients are homeless. Many women feel unsafe staying in shelters.

A related concern is the lack of pet-friendly housing and shelters. There is a strong link between domestic violence and animal abuse – men who abuse women often abuse animals, and vice-versa – and many women stay in abusive relationships if they cannot find somewhere safe to go where they can bring their pets.

Callers were referred to the EVA Notes *Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence* for information on safety planning for women with pets, and to the Homeless Prevention Program:

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/homeless-prevention-program>.

Comments:

"Finding space is virtually impossible. Lots of people are being turned away."

"There's long waitlists for BC Housing and second stage housing. How do we help clients find safe housing that they can afford?"

"BC Housing has a waiting list of two to three years."

“For the last year, when trying to find housing for clients, I’ve been contacting local churches. Sometimes they are able to provide crisis grants. They are more able to help this year than they were before.”

“[My agency] was just awarded a contract with BC Housing for affordable housing. We’re really thrilled. Our ED has been working really hard with BC Housing and the city to make that come to fruition. The plan would be that there will be about 92 affordable housing units. It’s been a long time coming, and there’s definitely a big, big need in this community.”

“We find that a lot of older women are being evicted from their rental housing due to their [adult children] living with them having an addiction or mental health issue. We turn to the Senior Services Society to provide outreach and housing for older women, but sometimes they’re on a waitlist. It’s a huge problem for us.”

“I’ve certainly noticed that there are some times that it’s impossible to find any temporary or transition housing within [my community]. Back in the day, you could always find a house somewhere, even if you had to help with transportation costs, but there were a couple of times last year where there was no space anywhere, even in the surrounding area.”

“We do have both a homeless outreach program and prevention program, but they can only support so many clients. There’s still a real gap.”

“The Homeless Prevention program in our community has already used all of its funds, so people are unable to access that as well.”

“It’s a real struggle for women with kids going to school, and having to go through the Family Court system where they are being told that they can’t leave the area, but they can’t find anywhere that they can afford to live.”

“It’s especially challenging to find housing for women who are leaving their abuser and can’t leave their pets behind or they will be abused. Add a cat or a dog, and you go to the bottom of the list.”

“For many women, their pets are their family – the one living being that they feel safe with. I talked to a number of transition houses and supports around town, and they are all saying, ‘We’d love to be able to help, but they’re not allowed to come into housing because they have a pet’.”

“Here in [my community], our transition house has a pet room. We get women who wouldn’t be here if we didn’t have the pet room. It’s well worth trying to make happen.”

6. Accessing Legal Help for Family Court, and Supports for Immigrant Women

Programs from across the province continue to report a serious lack of Family Court Support for women who don't qualify for Legal Aid, but cannot afford a lawyer. Inequalities arise when their partner has more financial means than they have, and therefore is able to afford a lawyer, or a better lawyer, and /or more hours of a lawyer's time than they are.

Meetings and interviews requiring interpreters take extra time, and more Legal Aid hours are needed to support immigrant women. Family Courts don't offer free interpreters, and many women can't afford one. Women are sometimes forced to represent themselves in proceedings being conducted in a language they are not fluent in. Community-based Victim Service workers are not mandated to support clients through Family Court, and many communities don't have an Outreach program.

Some good news – the Permanent Residency condition that required a woman to live with her sponsor for two years after being admitted to Canada was removed in cases of spousal abuse. A lot of women with English as a second language need help to write letters to Immigration, such as to inform them that they are no longer living with an abusive sponsor.

Callers were referred to the Legal Services Society "Family Law in BC" webpage at: <http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/> for more information on legal aid and family law, and to the LSS Family LAWLine at: http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/help/who_telephoneAdviceLine.php.

They were also referred to the Rise Women's Legal Centre, as they have a province-wide mandate: <https://womenslegalcentre.ca/>. It was also pointed out that West Coast LEAF has a Family Law Project (which includes the RISE Centre), and will intervene in cases that have important consequences for family law.

Comments:

"Lots of women can't get Legal Aid, but can't afford a lawyer."

"The bottom line is, if they do get Legal Aid, they are not getting 'the full enchilada' of services. So if her husband is able to hire a lawyer, these women do not have equal support in court – they don't have the representation their husbands have."

"Since Legal Aid's funding has been cut so much, what we're noticing is that even if a client is approved for Legal Aid, sometimes her referral is limited to only 60 days. If she has a trial scheduled for next year, her Legal Aid hours are expired. That's definitely been a barrier."

“We are always running short of Legal Aid time to complete the case. It could be custody, or division of property or whatever.”

“Some of these women, English is her second language, and they are not able to self-represent. Right now Legal Aid allows \$35 an hour for an interpreter, but nowadays an interpreter charges \$65 an hour. So what is she supposed to do? She’s not able to give evidence.”

“For women coming from different countries, there’s lots of fear around going in front of a Judge and talking about what happened – especially if English is their second language.”

“Our community is fairly large, but yet so small when it comes to the diverse communities. So with those individuals on the list that are certified to translate, there’s usually a conflict.”

7. Accessing Dental and Prescription Help

Other areas where anti-violence workers struggle to find badly needed free or low cost services for their clients are dental health and prescriptions. Callers were referred to Fair PharmaCare at:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/who-we-cover/fair-pharmacare-plan>,

and the BC Dental Association re: reduced cost dental clinics at: <http://www.bcdental.org/yourdentalhealth/dentalclinics.aspx>.

Comments:

“We are lucky in [my community] in that one of our local doctors was willing to provide some space for dentists to work. This was done through one of our public health workers; she was able to get some funding. It’s an “at cost” dental clinic, so if someone is on income assistance everything will be covered. If the person is not on income assistance, it will cut their dental costs usually in half.”

8. Navigating Court in Rural Settings

There are special challenges in supporting clients through court in rural communities, including distance to court, lack of transportation, lack of resources such as Family Court supports, cost of transportation, childcare, infrequent sittings, intersecting relationships, and privacy concerns in a community where everyone is known to each other.

Comments:

“It’s sometimes used as a tactic by abusers in our community to file for [Family] Court in the next nearest town, so that women who don’t have transportation

have a really hard time making it to court. Our bus schedules do not line up with the court hours. Add childcare on top of that, and it's a huge issue."

9. Critical Issues and Challenges Faced by Programs (and Clients)

Many of the critical issues and challenges reported by the programs were the same as those reported over the last years – lack of funding, low wages, staff turnover, doing more with less in the face of ever-increasing demands for service, and a lack of training opportunities.

There is a close correlation between challenges faced by programs and challenges faced by clients. Workers are struggling to support women with intersecting issues, including poverty, homelessness, mental health challenges and addictions, and lack of childcare and transportation. Especially in rural and remote communities, there can be few resources and services to refer clients to.

In addition, one participant reported that her community recently suffered from a shocking double homicide/suicide. A mother and her teenage daughter were murdered, and their killer – the mother's boyfriend – then took his own life. People in the community were not aware that domestic violence was happening in the home. The worker reported that it was a very traumatic event for the entire community. She called for more education and training for frontline workers and for the community as a whole, to help identify the homes where violence is taking place.

Comments:

"One of our identified gaps here is the mental wellness of our youth. So many youth have attempted suicide. We have a big age category that is at very high risk."

"I'm afraid that if my client does not get some help, we are going to lose her to suicide."

"We have several files with women we are having a hard time keeping safe because at the beginning they want to support the legal process, but a couple of months later they want to return to their offenders. We just try and keep the door open until they are ready."

"We're really treading on fog when it comes to providing PTSD support, and support for clients with undiagnosed – and even diagnosed – mental health issues. And then top that with hidden addictions. I'm very surprised that a lot more serious things have not happened."

"The genocide on the Aboriginal community is a huge inter-generational factor here. We should be dealing with families holistically, and at least getting an idea of what the intergenerational factors are, because they ride down through the generations. We need a new model of treatment that is holistic and provides

proper support, tools and information for workers to deal with our people effectively.”

“We’ve noticed an issue with women not having childcare or finances for childcare. That prevents them from accessing appointments and groups.”

10. Family Court – Shift To 50/50 Parenting Time

The Family Law Act that came into effect in 2013 puts more of an emphasis on shared parenting. Workers expressed concern that this gives abusive partners another tool and more opportunities to control and harass their ex-partners. Other workers expressed concerns for the safety of younger children that are court ordered to spend time with an abusive parent, even if they don’t want to.

Comments:

“The child is still very invisible in Family Court. You may have one parent that’s not as nurturing, or maybe even not feeding them properly. They are not looking at the toll that it’s taking on the children in this kind of situation.”

“This kind of order is not in the best interests of the child.”

“We’ve got two newer judges, they are really very, very focused on the idea that it’s important for children to spend time with their fathers, and that idea of 50/50, but without looking at the context of abuse.”

“I was seeing some improvements in the courts as far as looking at dynamics [of abuse] more, and now it’s like going back in time, and women getting really restricted in where they can live, and fearing for their children, and children having two half homes with very different sets of rules.”

“I had a case where an 8-year-old kid was suicidal. He was going to kill himself if he had to spend time with his father, who was beating him. Thank God, the person who wrote the view of the child report put that in there.”

11. Lack of a Trauma Informed Approach in Courts, MCFD, and the Community

There was discussion around how to facilitate more “trickle down” and dissemination of the type of information presented at the recent Trauma Informed Practice Conference to local police, Crown, Judges, MCFD and the community in general. It was pointed out that in last November’s Fifth Justice Summit, trauma informed practice was identified as an important aspect of enhancing justice system responses. Several callers felt there is growing awareness of trauma informed approaches in general.

Callers were referred to the April MPSSG Information Bulletin: Focus on Trauma Informed Practice:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/info-resources/info-bulletin-april-2017.pdf>, and the recordings from the March Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Symposium: <https://mediasitemob1.mediagroup.ubc.ca/Mediasite/Catalog/catalogs/TIP-2017-SYMPOSIUM-SESSIONS>.

Comments:

"I participated in the Trauma Informed Practices Symposium, and I just felt blown away. I thought, 'Oh my gosh, none of this is happening with our partners.'"

"I think I see [trauma informed approaches] starting to happen."

"At BC's fifth Justice Summit in November 2015, trauma-informed practice was identified as an important aspect of enhancing justice system response to victims of violence."

12. Training

There was discussion around the continued need for both basic and advanced trainings. Callers were invited to submit their ideas for workshops and speakers for the 2017 ATF. Training requests included basic training for new workers, family law, protection orders (criminal and family), working with women with substance abuse and mental health issues, working with male survivors, and taking a trauma-informed approach to the work.

Comments:

"I am going on maternity leave, and I need to get my replacement up to speed as soon as possible. What training is available for her?"

"I really miss the trainings the Ministry used to provide through the J.I. years ago. They were so valuable. There's not been anything to replace them."

"We don't have the budget to provide much training outside of the EVA ATF."

"We have had a lot of turnover the past year, and we badly need CORE training for the new workers."

"I would like the opportunity for some more advanced trainings."

13. Counselling and Support Programs for Men

The interest in and requests for counselling and support programs for men continue to increase. EVA BC fields calls about both supports for male survivors, and for male perpetrators on a regular basis. There are very few free or low-cost resources for men who are not court-mandated to take some form of anger management or healthy relationships course. Many clients do not want their relationships to end – just the abuse, and are looking for resources for their abusive partners. There can be a narrow window of opportunity when an abuser is remorseful and willing to work on his issues, and if there is no support available, that opportunity is lost.

Comments:

“In our Community Coordination and ICAT meetings, this comes up time and time again. We are in a remote community, and there just aren’t any services. I don’t think it’s up to [anti-violence workers] to provide these services, but we want to be part of the solution, because we recognize this is an issue.”

“I’m glad MPSSG increased funding for the existing Healthy Relationships programs.”

“Theoretically, there’s mandated assaultive men’s services available here, but there’s not. There’s nothing mandated that specifically addresses the issue of abuse in relationships.”

“So many people on our VAWIR have identified that we need services for men. If you don’t support both parties, you can’t expect the whole relationship to change.”

“In the last two years, people have lost jobs and lost their homes here. They don’t have the means to afford private counsellors.”

“People who are working camp jobs can’t come in Monday to Friday from 9:00 to 5:30, or even one evening a week.”

“In [my community], men cannot access counselling or anger management because it’s not available in their language.”

“While we need services for men who abuse, services that are available for women who have been abused are stretched so thin.”

14. Elder Abuse and Abuse of Older Women

There was discussion around the dynamics around and barriers faced by older women in abusive relationships. These include economic dependence, not wanting to leave a home where they have lived for many years or lose joint

assets, ageism, social isolation and/or a lack of supports, health challenges, a reluctance to access services they see as intended for younger women, and the effects of years of trauma. Some older abusive men have never been held accountable for their abusive behaviour (especially before the provincial VAWIR policy), leaving older women feeling helpless and unsupported.

Some older women have grown skilled at minimizing, rationalizing and justifying the abuse. Many grew up believing that you stayed with your husband no matter what. Some women's older partners have become abusive as a result of dementia, and the women feel that they should stay and take care of them.

Callers were referred to the following resources for working with older women: Seniors First BC at: <http://seniorsfirstbc.ca/>, *Roads to Safety: Legal Information for Older Women in BC* from West Coast LEAF (available for free download along with an accompanying webinar at: <http://www.westcoastleaf.org/roads/>), and the Raising the Profile Project at <http://www.seniorsraisingtheprofile.ca/>.

Comments:

"I find a lot of women who are older do not report abuse because of their dependence on the abuser – especially if they have health issues and are dependent on him to drive them to the doctor and so forth."

"One of my older clients told me she has put up with the abuse for so long that it would be too hard to change her life at her age."

"With BC Housing, you have to have children. We have quite a few older women who stay a lot longer in our transition house because there is nowhere for them to go, and no resources."

15. Supporting Sex Assault Survivors/Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assaults

There was discussion around supporting clients who has experienced drug facilitated sexual assaults, and the difficulty of getting charges approved when the survivor's memory is impaired as the result of taking or being given substances. It was pointed out that alcohol is still most perpetrator's drug of choice, followed by easily obtainable over the counter rugs like Benadryl, and common prescription drugs like Ativan and sleeping pills.

Callers were referred to Part 1.5 of the EVA BC's *Sexual Assault Support Worker Handbook* at: <http://endingviolence.org/publications/sexual-assault-support-worker-handbook/>, which discusses drug facilitated sexual assault.

Comments:

"I think we'll all probably worked with clients that know that something happened to them, but don't know what."

"In [my community], there's been a number of drug facilitated sexual assaults with very marginalized people, women who were couch surfing, homeless or street workers. That unfortunately makes it even worse."

16. Confidentiality – What Information Can We Share with Whom?

There was discussion around limits to sharing information, in what instances you can share information, and those instances when a client becomes concerned about who you will be sharing their personal information with.

Callers were referred to the CCWS Backgrounder *Disclosing Information in Woman Abuse Cases: Guiding Principles for Community-Based Antiviolence Programs Working With High Risk Case Assessment Teams*:

http://endingviolence.org/files/uploads/in_woman_abuse_cases_oct_30_2012_rev10072013.pdf),

The CCWS *Safety Issues Protocol* Backgrounder:

http://endingviolence.org/files/uploads/lletin_June_10_2006_January_2014_Update_doc.pdf),

and the *ICAT Best Practices Guide*:

<http://endingviolence.org/publications/icat-best-practices-guide/>

Comments:

"We're getting a lot of information about our clients from committees that we sit on. And a lot of time, it's not information that the woman would have necessarily given us."

"We always tell them what the exceptions [to confidentiality] are, including if their file is deemed highest risk by an ICAT."

"We often see some agencies that will bring up a 'hypothetical situation'. They're not sharing the client's name, but this is a small community, so 8 out of 10 of us know who they are talking about. Then they feel like you had this conversation about the file even if you didn't participate in it."

"I get demands from the police and different services demanding I share all contact information with them. But I know that if I share it, that trust [with my client] is broken. And the attitude with police and probation is 'you're just a Victim Services worker – you have to give me this information'."

"We're constantly having to fight to protect our client's privacy."

“The caveat that the Privacy Commissioner put in place was ‘life trumps privacy’. If we are in a situation, is that the lens that we utilize? When it comes push to shove that we need to release that information, we’ve got to look at the purpose behind why we have to release it.”

17. Obligation to Report Regarding Minors at Significant Risk of Harm

It was clarified that there is always an obligation to report if a minor is in need of protection. Several callers requested clarification around the obligation to report sexual assaults against teenagers or young women in certain situations, such as date rapes. It was stressed that whether or not the young person remains at risk (such as from a family member in the same home) is a key factor in whether or not a worker is obligated to report. If the client is a mature minor and not at risk, she should be presented with all available options and the pros and cons of these options should be discussed with her, to assist her to make an informed decision.

Callers were informed that, while the BC Third Party Reporting Protocol is intentionally focused on adults aged 19 and over, Third Party Reporting (TPR) can be considered in exceptional cases for younger survivors. The process needs to be worked out at the local level between Community-Based Victim Services and police on a case-by-case discretionary basis.

Callers were referred to the CCWS documents *Third Party Reporting for Survivors Under 19* Information Bulletin:

http://endingviolence.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/04/TPR_Under_19_CCWS_Info_Bulletin_Feb_6_2017.pdf and *Confidentiality for Survivors Under 19*: http://endingviolence.org/files/uploads/aault_survivors_under_19_June_2012_Final_copy.pdf.

It was also mentioned that the ICAT Best Practices Manual contains excellent information about sharing information and privacy.

Comments:

“We have had teenagers who have come to our organization who have been sexually assaulted. They might not even recognize it as that. Knowing what the process looks like for someone who reports sexual assault in our community, I’m unclear about what to do. I don’t know if I can give them a choice about whether to report or not.”

“Other service providers have reached out to me and said ‘we need training on how to support youth with this’. We plan to set up a sub-committee.”

“It’s a party, and there are drugs and alcohol, and consent is confusing – or in their situation that’s how they would reflect on it – and then what happens leaves them feeling violated and shamed.”

“What about third party reporting when it comes to minors?”

“Coming from an immigrant community, I find the young girls are very judged at a family level. When they are seeking help, minors need a non-judgemental approach and a lot of support and information, and time to make a decision on whether or not they want to report or not. Then they are often ready to report.”

18. Maintaining Community Coordination for Safety in Relationship Committees

There was discussion around the importance and need for community coordination for safety in relationship committees. Callers talked about how, without designated funding, community coordination work was being done “off the side of their desk”, or even in their own free time. Without a designated, paid coordinator to oversee meetings, minutes, agendas, etc., work is often not distributed evenly among those at the table. Important players are not at the table at all, or there inconsistently. In some communities, Coordination Committees have become inactive, or meet infrequently.

Comments:

“I have taken on the role of coordinating the team within our community. There’s a desire in our community for it among service providers. The challenge is that my workload is already busy, and I feel like there’s this messaging, from our funder and from everywhere, that this collaboration is so important, but there’s not the funding to back up those statements. It’s time consuming.”

“We sort of get together and do the bare minimum, but I don’t want to lose people [from the committee].”

“There needs to be solid, continued funding to do this [coordination committee] work.”

“You can’t have something successful if everyone is scrambling all the time.”

“Would there be a possibility, if we get a new government, for getting positions that are a coordinator for safety, VAWIR and all that that, rather than someone in a position like mine that already has 80 clients?”

19. Referrals from RCMP Victim Services

Despite clear referral policies that have been in place for years, some Community-Based Victim Services programs are still reporting that victims of power-based crimes are not being referred to them by the RCMP Victim Service programs in their communities.

It was pointed out that the MPSSG Referral Policy states that Community-based Victim Service Programs are the contracted primary service providers for victims/survivors of power-based crimes, and that police and police-based Victim Service Programs should refer all victims and survivors of such crimes to community-based Victim Service Programs in an appropriate and timely manner.

The Policy also states that Detachment Commanders must meet with the local agencies contracted by the Ministry to deliver police-based and community-based victim services to discuss policy obligations, ensure that referral protocols are in place, and ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly understood.

There was discussion around local protocols and approaches that have been successful in other communities. Callers were advised to contact EVA BC's CCWS program for assistance if attempts to resolve the issue at the local level are not successful. Callers were also referred to the Referral Policy for Victims of Power-Based Crimes:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/info-resources/power-based-crimes-referral-policy.pdf>

Comments:

"I and other people I've talked to from communities around here are still having major problems with referrals for people who are victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. I see these women when I'm in court [on another file], and it's very frustrating."

"Yet I talked to a number of people from [another community] just casually, and they said, 'No, as police victim services, we refer right away. We go to the scene, but then we refer them right away to community-based. That's our provincial mandate.'"

"We have a similar situation in our community as well. RCMP Victim Services does not refer directly to our programs. But I have heard of other communities where they do that."

"In [our community], we have a protocol that is working very well. RCMP Victim Services does refer directly to our program, and then they close the file."

20. Use of Technology to Skype or Facetime with Rural Clients

There was a brief discussion about whether or not workers were using technology to communicate with their clients. Although many programs use email to communicate non-confidential information to clients, no one on the call reported using Skype or FaceTime.

Comments:

“People have trouble accessing their computers in further regions.”

“My administrators are always very vigilant about concerns around privacy.”

21. Challenges Around Enforcement and Accountability in Relation to Abusers Breaching Their Conditions of Release

There was a brief discussion around abusers who are “repeat offenders” continuing to breach their conditions such as no contact orders.

Comments:

“I have a couple of cases where the woman wants to move out of the city or the province. They are quite afraid of [their ex], because he keeps breaching. But there is a problem because of parenting time [ordered by] family court. This happens quite often.”

22. Judges Allowing Representation/Non-Representation in Court

Callers were given a “heads up” about a particular Family Court case where the woman had a lawyer present, and her ex-partner – the opposing party – didn’t. The Judge asked the woman’s lawyer to leave so the case could continue with non-representation for both parties. No one on the call reported hearing of a similar situation.

23. Complexities of Mental Health/Addictions/Resources and Waitlists

There was discussion about the increasingly complex and intersecting issues that many clients referred to anti-violence programs are facing. These often include serious addictions and difficult mental health concerns. Workers feel the need for more training in this area.

These complex issues are beyond the scope, skills and mandate of many service providers. Even the more skilled and experienced of the STV Counsellors are only mandated to provide “mid-range” counselling, and not to work with complex mental health issues and/or addiction.

There was talk about the need for some sort of “wrap around” program for clients where they would be thoroughly assessed and offered a holistic array of services. A “patient navigator” type position would assist clients to identify the services that they need, and support them in accessing them.

Comments:

“When we are looking at all of our programs – whether it’s STV, Victim Services or new MPSSG reporting template for EVA Outreach – one of the things we look at in our work with our clients is the many factors and complexities that are associated with individuals when they are coming in. And sometimes we will see other systems who are putting in place a stop gap measure – like a Band-Aid. So they refer them to us because they have huge waitlists, etc. But they don’t realize the specialized work that we do – that we might not necessarily be specialized in mental health and addictions. So it’s a huge gap in these areas, and we’ve been talking about it for many, many years. At our consultation tables we are talking about it each and every meeting we have, but we’re not even breaking the ice here.”

“We need holistic intergenerational trauma support. When someone in a family gets hurt badly like that, the whole family is traumatized and effected by it.”

“We need training in these areas, but we also need specialized resources to refer these clients to.”

“Addiction comes from years of trauma.”

24. Working with LGBTQ2S Clients

Programs want to be as accessible and welcoming to LGBTQ2S clients as possible. Some are looking for best practices, and others do not yet have clear policies in place for serving trans women. Several callers expressed the need for resources.

Callers were referred to EVA BC’s Safe Choices Program for consultation and training for service providers who want to make their services more effective and accessible for women in same-sex/gender relationships.

They were also referred to the *Trans Inclusion Policy Manual for Women’s Organizations* on the EVA BC website at:

<http://endingviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2001/06/Trans-Inclusion-Policy-Manual-Darke.pdf>, the Toronto agency 519’s toolkit *Creating Authentic Spaces: A Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit to Support the Implementation of Institutional and Social Change*:

<http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/trans-inclusion-matters>),

and the UK organization Stonewall's 4 module *Service Delivery Toolkit* for building LGBT inclusive services:

<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/service-delivery-toolkit>

Callers were also referred to the FORGE (an American national transgender anti-violence organization) website at: <http://forge-forward.org/>.

Relevant FORGE resources include:

- *First Do No Harm: 8 Tips for Addressing Violence Against Transgender and Gender Non-Binary People* (available at <http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/do-no-harm-8-tips-addressing-violence-FINAL.pdf>)
- *Safety Planning: A Guide for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals who are experiencing intimate partner violence* (available at <http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/safety-planning-tool.pdf>)
- *Creating a Trans-Welcoming Environment: A tips sheet for sexual assault service providers* (available at <http://forge-forward.org/2011/06/30/trans-welcoming-environment-a-tips-sheet/>)
- *Practical Tips for Working with Transgender Survivors of Sexual Violence* (available at <http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/Practical-Tips-working-with-SV-survivors.pdf>)
- *Quick Tips: Trans Inclusion (A guide for service providers)*, (available at http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/quicktips_providers1.pdf),
- *Is Your "T" Written in Disappearing Ink? A Checklist for Transgender Inclusion* (available at http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/inclusion-checklist_r.pdf.)
- *Is Your Agency Ready to Serve Transgender Survivors?* (Available at http://www.ncdsv.org/images/FORGE_IsYourAgencyReadyToServeTransgenderSurvivors.pdf)

Comments:

"Our agency is in the process of reviewing our policies and procedures to ensure that we are trans inclusive. But we could use some resources."

"We had a person who was transitioning and wasn't able to fit into the women's shelter. The other shelter was not a safe place for this person. There were no resources to support her."

"It's really important to have policy around this, especially when you are doing anti-violence work."

"We don't really run into that a whole lot here. But we need to be ready for when we do."

“We have a trans woman who wants to join our support group for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. We are looking for some guidelines.”

25. Concerns With Women Being Wrongfully Arrested

As in past years, program staff are reporting that their female clients are being arrested in cases of domestic violence where their male partners are the primary aggressor, often even when there is evidence of a history of violence by their partners. It appears that many police are not trained in, or not implementing, a primary aggressor analysis.

The RCMP “E” Division’s Primary Aggressor Policy is outlined in their *Operational Manual Part 2: Criminal Code Offences, persons, violence in relationships: Section 4, primary aggressor*). Callers were referred to the Police section on pages eight and nine of the MPSSG VAWIR policy at:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/vs-info-for-professionals/info-resources/vawir.pdf> for information on how police are supposed to assess who is the primary aggressor when the parties allege mutual aggression. Among other things, the policy states that “The primary aggressor is the party who is the most dominant rather than the first, aggressor”, and outlines some circumstances to be taken into consideration, such as who has superior strength, who suffered the most physical and/or emotional injury, who has defensive wounds, and what is the history and pattern of abuse in the relationship. It was noted that the practice of dual arrests is discouraged.

EVA BC’s CCWS program is currently looking into the issue of women wrongfully arrested in domestic violence situations, and callers were advised to call CCWS to report any incidents in their communities (with their client’s permission).

They were also referred to the CCWS Backgrounder *Women Being Arrested* on the EVA BC website at:

<http://endingviolence.org/publications/women-being-arrested-backgrounder/>), 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*: <http://www.bwss.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/womens-arrest-toolworker-web.pdf>).

Comments:

“I’ve been finding with some of my clients the primary aggressor report has not been used, and the client is being charged.”

“We’ve been having that issue too.”

“Yes, we’re still seeing that in [my community] too.”

“The woman is sometimes pretty upset after the incident, and the abuser is not, so he can tell a story that she’s the one that attacked him, and she’s the one that’s charged.”

“If a woman doesn’t speak English, and the man is speaking English – sometimes interpreters are not used – and he says he is the one who is the victim, sometimes we have to find someone else to help the woman if she becomes the accused.”

“Some of my clients feel that they were not taken seriously because they were drinking before the assault.”

26. Service Pressures and Funding

The last few minutes of the call were spent discussing the many years of increased demand for service without additional resources to meet this added need, resulting in workers carrying higher and higher caseloads with little or no increase in wages.

It was pointed out that increased demand on the systems and agencies we work alongside – such as the courts, Legal Aid, transition houses and Mental Health – also have a negative impact on our clients and our ability to do the work.

“It impacts everyone – women, children, men – everyone.”

“We have been bringing up this issue at every opportunity with anyone [in government] that will listen for years. It is beyond frustrating that we haven’t been heard yet.”

“Maybe if we have a change in government, we will finally see some additional funding for this important work that it is getting harder and harder to do.”