Violence, Substance Use and Mental Health
A Peer Approach to Increasing Your Safety

Produced by the Ending Violence Association of BC
You Are Not Alone
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With funding from Vancouver Foundation's
Tula Community Fund and the Canadian Women's Foundation
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# Table of Contents

## Introduction

1. What is the PAVE Toolkit? ..................................................................................................4
2. How to Use the PAVE Toolkit ..........................................................................................5

## Part One: Context

1. Making the Connection: Violence Against Women, Mental Health and Substance Use ...6
2. Substance Use and Violence Against Women .................................................................8
3. Mental Health and Violence Against Women .................................................................9

## Part Two: Risk Assessment and Safety Planning

1. Risk Factors for Relationship Abuse & Violence .............................................................10
2. Safety Planning for Survivors of Violence ...................................................................12
3. Safety Planning for Women Using Substances ..............................................................19
4. Safety Planning for Women with Mental Health Issues ...............................................21
5. Safety Planning for Sex Workers ..................................................................................23
6. Safety Planning for Women in Rural Areas ..................................................................25
8. What Can You Expect if the Police Become Involved? ................................................27
9. Sexual Assault Risk Reduction ....................................................................................30
10. Safety Following a Sexual Assault .............................................................................33
11. My Community ............................................................................................................33
12. Warning Signs of Abuse .............................................................................................34
13. How to Talk to Friends About Safety Concerns .........................................................37
14. Some Do’s and Don’t of Peer Support .........................................................................38

## Part Three: Using the Toolkit for a Group

1. Notes for Facilitators .....................................................................................................40
2. DVD Discussion Questions ............................................................................................41

## Part Four: Resources
Introduction

What is the Peer Anti-Violence Education (PAVE) Toolkit?

The PAVE Toolkit – a plain language guidebook and a DVD – is for women who are experiencing violence or abuse who wish to increase the safety in their lives.

Anti-violence workers across British Columbia have long recognized that many women who have survived violence also struggle with mental health and/or substance use issues. Stopping the Violence Counsellors in particular know that many women not only have complex histories of trauma but also experience marginalization by society and by services that could be helping them.

In 2007, the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) produced Freedom from Violence: Tools for Working with Trauma, Mental Health and Substance Use. Since its introduction, the Toolkit has become a valuable resource used by counsellors and other anti-violence workers across the province.

In November of 2007, the editor of Freedom from Violence, Susan Armstrong, took the resource to a Women’s Harm Reduction Research Group (WHRRG) meeting. The WHRRG brings together women from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES) and researchers currently doing work with women in the community, in an attempt to ensure that any research done is mutually beneficial and peer-focused. The women attending the WHRRG group were very enthusiastic about the Freedom from Violence Toolkit. They encouraged EVA BC to develop a modified toolkit that would be accessible to women living and working in the DTES who are directly impacted by violence and who struggle with mental health or substance use issues.

In September 2008, a working group of seven women from the Downtown Eastside who were identified as natural community leaders began meeting weekly to talk about the impact of relationship violence and sexual assault in their lives. In November 2008, they met with award-winning filmmaker Aerlyn Weissman, and over the course of five days made two vignettes about risk and safety in their community. One vignette is about safety planning and talking about safety with friends, and the other is about community connections and community pride.

To put these vignettes into a wider perspective, the film incorporates interviews with women who have made safety in their communities a cornerstone of their work.

We would like to thank the seven brave women of the Peer Team, for their candour, humour and guidance throughout this process. Their voices guided this project through to completion.

Members of the PAVE Project Peer Team hope that this toolkit will:

- “Provide HOPE”
- “Create a real resource for my friends”
- “Make a tangible plan”
- “Offer new options for women”
- “Demystify the process of reporting”
- “Build my skills”
- “Share my knowledge”
- “Acknowledge survivors of violence”
How to Use the PAVE Toolkit

The PAVE Toolkit is intended to be used primarily by peer helpers and service providers who can introduce the topics in formal venues (e.g. support groups) and informal venues (e.g. gatherings of friends). Individual women can also use the toolkit on their own.

By talking candidly about risk factors, safety planning, available services and how to get help, women who have experienced violence will find ways to make their own lives and the lives of their peers safer. The PAVE Toolkit is intended to promote important discussion about relationship violence and sexual assault among women who may also have mental health and/or substance use issues. The Guidebook and the DVD can be used individually; however, we recommend using them together if possible. Watching the DVD before going through this Guidebook will enrich your discussions.

Please see Part Three of this guidebook, “Using the Toolkit for a Group,” for more information.
Part One: Context

Making the Connection: Violence Against Women, Mental Health and Substance Use

We live in a world where violence against women helps to enforce inequality and oppression. Relationship violence and sexual violence are a risk for all women, but even more so for women who have struggled with mental health issues, women who use substances and women working in the sex trade.

Stress caused by current or past violence can affect all aspects of a woman’s life. Women who were abused as children are more likely to develop mental health problems as adults. Women who have experienced trauma from violence often feel like they’re not in control of their emotions. As well, substance use is very common among survivors of violence. Substances can help ease the physical and emotional pain caused by assaults and abuse.

Violence, mental health and substance use are all interconnected. It is crucial that women talk about these issues and be given the tools to keep themselves and their peers safe. We hope that the PAVE Toolkit will promote this important discussion and empower women to increase their safety.

“I think the biggest thing is that women [should get] messages that it is not their fault. There are many woman that feel embarrassed or shame, there are many abusers who will doormat a woman and make her feel so bad she has no self-esteem anymore…”

—PAVE Project Peer Team member
Women in the Sex Trade Are Often Unsafe

Two Vancouver based studies of women involved in the sex trade show how important it is to discuss safety:

Christine Christensen and Leonard Cler-Cunningham interviewed 183 women, aged 15 to 51. They found that:

- 83% reported working in the sex trade to support their drug habit.
- 73% had been threatened with physical assault more than once in the previous year.
- 47% had been assaulted with a weapon more than once in the previous year.
- 56% had been sexually assaulted more than once in the previous year.
- The vast majority of these assaults were not reported to the police or to a bad date sheet.

Melissa Farley, Jacqueline Lynne and Ann J. Cotton interviewed 100 women aged 13 to 49. They found that:

- 82% had experienced childhood sexual abuse by an average of four perpetrators.
- 72% had experienced childhood physical abuse by a caregiver until they were bruised or injured.
- 90% had experienced physical assaults in prostitution; 82% of the perpetrators were customers.
- 92% had experienced rape in prostitution.
- 63% reported experiencing physical health problems.
- 72% met the criteria for having post traumatic stress disorder.
- 86% had experienced current or past homelessness.


Substance Use and Violence Against Women

Drug addiction is not a disease but a way of adapting to desperately difficult situations. When a woman is using substances, she is often attempting to manage pain. She may be coping with illness, powerlessness, violence and/or mental health issues. She may be using alongside her partner because using together keeps the peace in their relationship. Getting high may provide her with an escape from problems or issues that she doesn’t see a way out of. Becoming addicted to a substance is a reality for many, but rarely does addiction stand on its own.

“… I started hurting myself. I couldn’t handle it. I started slashing myself up. And I would just get drunk. Mostly cuz I couldn’t stand the thought of being touched.”
—PAVE Project Team member

Activity Question 1: How is experiencing violence connected to using/getting high?

YOU ARE WORTH IT
Mental Health and Violence Against Women

A woman who experiences violence may experience significant changes in her mental and physical health. She may become depressed, anxious or angry for a period of time afterwards, or she may suffer for years from intense flashbacks, nightmares and chronically high levels of fear or anxiety even in safe situations. She may feel as if she can’t control her own feelings and emotions. Extreme poverty, racism, colonization, and isolation can also damage a woman’s mental health.

These connections might seem obvious, but they are often lost or ignored when a woman becomes involved in mental health services.
Part Two: Risk Assessment and Safety Planning

Risk Factors for Relationship Abuse & Violence

Relationship abuse includes: put-downs and constant criticism; stealing your money; lying about you; blaming you for his/her problems; forcing you to use drugs or alcohol; forcing you to turn tricks; forcing you to stay awake when you need to sleep; controlling what you do and where you go; accusing you of cheating; taking your medications away; destroying your things; hurting your pets; saying racist things to you; threatening to “out” you if you are gay, lesbian or trans; following you around; and many other behaviours. The abuser does these things to get power and control over you. He or she behaves in a way to make you feel unworthy, scared, dependent, or confused so you will stay and the abuser can feel in control.

For many women (one out of six) violence and abuse in a relationship begins when they are pregnant. If a relationship is already abusive, the woman is more at risk for increased physical assaults when she gets pregnant, and assaults are often targeted towards the belly, breasts and genitals.

“Men tend to use violence to control women. They brainwash the women, they have nowhere else to go, they have no out. And I thought, it’s important to say NO. People will help you. They will always help you. There are services for you. There are lots of things to help you. Whatever is being told to you is wrong.”

— PAVE Project Peer Team member
This checklist won’t give you a guaranteed answer, like YES, I’m at Risk, or NO I’m safe. But it can help you recognize if you are in increased danger. It might also validate some of your thoughts and ideas about the patterns that you see.

Please remember that this is just a guide. You are the expert on your life. If you feel unsafe, trust your instincts!

**Identifying the Risk**

(Adapted from Aid to Safety Assessment and Planning Manual For Women who Experience Violence in Their Relationships, BC Institute Against Family Violence and BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2005)

All these factors increase your risk of being seriously hurt or even killed.

**Abuser Factors:**

1. The abuser has used violence in the past to control their partner or others.
2. The abuser has threatened to hurt or kill you, your children or your pets.
3. The violence keeps getting worse (escalating) as time goes on.
4. The abuser ignores court orders, probation conditions or parole conditions.
5. The abuser has negative attitudes about women—for example, he or she believes that violence against women is normal, that you deserve the violence, and that they have the right to control you.
6. The abuser is involved in other criminal activity.
7. The abuser reacts strongly to the idea of the relationship ending—e.g. threatens to take the children, kill you, make sure no one else can have you, etc.
8. The abuser has employment problems or financial problems.
9. The abuser has substance use issues—they may be more violent when they are high.
10. The abuser has mental health issues—high levels of stress, paranoia, or breaks from reality may lead to violence.
Safety Support Factors

These factors can affect your safety in a violent relationship.

1. Personal support: Do you have people who will help you stay safe, listen to you and stand by you?
2. Living situation: Do you have safe, secure housing with supportive neighbours?
3. What your instincts are telling you: Is your gut is saying, “Get out,” or “this is bad?”
4. Your own beliefs: Do you believe that you have the right to be safe, that the abuse is not your fault and violence is not normal?
5. Your health: Is the abuse damaging your mental or physical health?
6. Your financial/employment problems: Are you staying with the abuser because you are scared of losing housing food or drugs if you leave?
7. Concerns about children: Are you scared of losing your kids if you leave the relationship? Are you worried about having to take care of them on your own?
8. Substance use: Are you more vulnerable to violence when you’re using, or when you’re trying to cut down or quit?
9. Access to services: Does your abuser control your access to services? Is your income assistance or housing in the abuser’s name? Is your abuser your sponsor to be in Canada?
10. Effectiveness of services: Are support services taking you seriously and listening to you?
11. Isolation: Does your partner move you around a lot or keep you inside all the time, or interfere with you contacting services and getting information?
12. Knowledge of services: Do you know about your rights? Do you know about the services that can help you?

Activity 3: Go through these two lists of factors and think about your situation. Did you learn any new information? Are there other factors that should be added here? Important: After you go through these lists, you might realize that you need more information or help right away. Please see the lists of services in Part Four for ideas of places that you can call.

Safety Planning for Survivors of Violence

Thinking through what you will do if the abuse or violence starts to escalate (increase/worsen) is an important way to take care of yourself. Having a safety plan can help you think clearly when a situation is getting out of control. Here are a variety of safety plans for different situations.

Please remember that the following information is just meant as a guide. You are the expert on your life. There are suggestions in that will work for some women, but that could be unsafe or unrealistic for others. Trust your instincts. You have probably already done or thought about some things to help you be safer. These are some more ideas.
Activity Question 4: What has worked well for you in staying safer? What has not worked well?

Cues That An Assault May Be Coming

(Information adapted from materials by Inspector John McKay, published by PACE Society, 2008)

This is a list of physical signs that a person might be about to attack someone.

• Their language gets worse, including threats and abuse.
• Their voice gets louder.
• Their eyes “harden.”
• They start sweating or shaking from adrenaline.
• Their breathing gets heavy or they hold their breath.
• Their body gets tenser.
• Their movements are erratic (unpredictable) and agitated.
• They clench their jaw and their fists.
• Their face and ears turn red, or their face turns pale.
• They clear their throat a lot because their saliva has dried up.
• They get closer to you.
• They “puff themselves up” to seem larger, or they tighten their bodies and get ready to spring.
Safety Planning in your Relationship

- Trust your intuition, instincts and experiences; do not doubt yourself if you feel unsafe.

- Practice how to get out of your home safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes could you use? If you have children, practice with them.

- Break your silence regarding the violence and abuse you are experiencing and reducing your isolation. Tell people in your life what is happening to you. Ask your neighbours to call the police if they hear a fight.

- Choose a code word that is known to your children, friends, family and/or neighbours. If you are with the abuser and you use this word in conversation, they will know you are in danger and call for help.

- If an assault seems possible, try to move to a space that is lowest risk (try to avoid bathrooms, garages, kitchens, rooms near weapons and rooms without access to an outside door).

- Plan ahead for where to go in an emergency (explore possibilities, including family, friends, women’s centres, drop-in centres and local transition houses/safe homes).

- Find someone who will support and listen to you without making judgments.

- Seek medical attention for all injuries. Be aware that you may have suffered physical damage you are not aware of, such as internal bleeding or concussions.

- Ensure that colour photographs are taken of all injuries. It is important to take pictures as injuries change in appearance, such as bruising that appears some time after an assault.

- Save torn or bloody clothing for evidence.

- Think seriously about reporting assaults to the police and be aware that the police must proceed with recommending charges if there is evidence to do so, even if you don’t want them to. It can help if you connect with an advocate or an anti-violence worker first (see CBVAP listing in resources) as they can assist you through the process.

- Keep evidence such as written notes of threats or apology and other documents.

- Record abusive incidents in a journal; keep the journal in a secret spot or with a trusted individual.

- Keep a list of names and numbers of all people who have witnessed any abuse or threats, and the dates the situations occurred (their evidence may be useful later). When the threats or abuse happen in public spaces (the street, shelters, medical clinics, etc., ensure you approach staff/shop keepers to ask for their name and confirm that they witnessed what went down). You may want to leave that list with a trusted individual.

- If you are looking up information online to help you leave, and your abuser has access to your computer, make sure you delete any record of what you have been doing. There are lots of tips on the Ontario Women’s Justice Network website. Go to www.owjn.org and click on Cover Your Tracks.
My Personal Safety Plan

When we have an argument, I will try to move to a low risk place such as
__________________________________________________________
(avoid the kitchen and bathroom, think about places where you will have access to an outside
door).

If an assault is about to happen, I will go to this place:
__________________________________________________________

I will keep the things I need (ID, cell phone, etc) in this spot
__________________________________________________________
so I can grab them quickly if I need to leave.

My important papers and immediate things I will need are stored here:
__________________________________________________________

I can call the following people for support:
__________________________________________________________

My code word for help is:
__________________________________________________________

Activity Question 5: Can you think of anything that you would add to
your own safety plan?
If You Are Planning to Leave

If you’re thinking about leaving an abusive relationship, it could be helpful to start using services at a women’s centre, or other women-only space—especially if your partner is a man. This reduces your isolation and provides you with a reason to have time away from your partner on a regular basis. Some day this may become your opportunity to get the support and help you need to leave the relationship.

It may not be safe to tell your partner you are leaving, as this often makes an abuser get even more violent and controlling. You might want to plan to leave when your partner is in the shower, asleep, at work or out of town, or when you are picking up children from school or going to an appointment.

If you have children, take them with you when you leave. Take copies of children’s medical papers, birth certificates and other important documents. If you are planning to leave, put these items in one place if possible. Some important documents/items include:

- Personal identification
- Address book
- Your birth certificate
- Children’s birth certificates
- Pictures
- Jewellery
- Social Insurance cards
- Children’s favourite toys and/or blankets
- School records
- Items of special sentimental value
- Medical records
- Bank books
- Keys
- Lease/rental agreement
- Medications
- Small saleable objects
- Social Assistance stubs
- List of important phone numbers
- Immigration papers
- Citizenship papers
Protection Orders

If you are comfortable doing so, contact the police after you leave and ask them to assist you by arranging for a protection order. Some examples of protection orders that police can put in place are:

Promise To Appear with an undertaking: (PTA or UTA):
If the police have made an arrest, they may put a PTA or UTA on the abuser before they release him/her. This can have conditions such as:

- To notify the bail supervisor/officer in charge of any change in address, employment or occupation
- Not to communicate directly or indirectly with you (your children can be included here if appropriate)
- Not to go to your residence, place of work or school
- To only obtain personal belongings from your home in the company of a police officer
- Not be within a certain area of the your home, place of work or school
- Not to have a firearm and surrender to police (or specified person) any firearm in their possession and any authorization, license or registration to have weapons
- Report at (time, date, address) and thereafter as directed by the bail supervisor

Peace Bond:
A peace bond is a protection order issued in provincial criminal court. You can apply for a peace bond yourself or the police can apply for you if they’ve already been involved in your case.

Peace Bonds can last for up to a year. If the abuser violates the order, then they can be arrested and brought back to court to face charges. A new order may be issued at that time.

If You (Or Your Partner) Have Already Left
If you are comfortable doing so, contact the police and ask them to assist you in staying safe by accompanying you when you return to the home to collect your personal belongings. If you are not comfortable involving the police, request that someone else accompany you.

Attempt to find housing (even if temporary) that has adequate security: in a location that cannot be easily accessed from the street, with doors with locks, locked front entranceway, etc.

Consider living with someone else or in a shelter for a short time.

If you are staying in your home, change the locks on doors.

Install security measures such as additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, etc. Security can be increased by blocking sliding windows and placing barriers under door handles.
If your partner follows you, go to a place where there are people.

If you live in the same neighbourhood as your ex, or hang out with the same group of people, tell the people who you trust that you have left the relationship due to safety concerns. Tell them what you want them to do if they see your ex approach you. Don’t be ashamed to ask for help or support. Your ex may be less likely to intimidate, threaten or abuse you in the presence of others. Refuse to be alone with your ex.

Change your schedule. Don’t travel the same route each day. Change your appointment times, stay at a different shelter, or request that your services be transferred to another office.

Inform any service providers that you have left a violent relationship and provide a description of your ex.

Teach your children how to call 911 and how to make a collect call to you and to a trusted family member or friend, in the event of an emergency.

Tell people who take care of your children (including their school), which people have permission to pick up the children. If you have a protection order, give a copy of it to the people who care for your children, especially if it has conditions regarding the safety of your children.

Inform your neighbours that your ex-partner no longer lives with you and ask them to call the police if they see him or her.

Keep a copy of any protection orders with you at all times. If you call the police to enforce it, they will ask to see a copy.

Inform necessary people that you have a protection order (friends, children’s schools, child-care).

Activity Question 6: What parts of this plan work for you? What’s different for you?
Safety Plan for Women Using Substances

Adapted from Getting Safe and Sober: Real Tools You Can Use, by the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and other online resources at www.accessingsafety.org.

If drug or alcohol use occurs alongside violence in my relationship with my partner, I can enhance my safety by doing some or all of the following:

I will try to remember that:

- It is easier to keep safe when I am not using substances.
- Alcohol and drug use can impair my judgment and make it harder for me to choose safe options and access services.
- It can be hard to ask for help when I am using or drinking.

Activity Question 7: What parts of this plan work for you? What would you add or change?
**Things I can do:**

I can call ____________________ for support when I feel like drinking or using to cope.

The following people/places/things can be unsafe for me:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

My warning signs that I am getting stressed and craving substances are:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

and this is what I will do in these situations to try to keep myself from over drinking/using and to try to keep myself safe:

________________________________________________________________________

If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risks of violence and are committed to my safety. I can:

________________________________________________________________________

I can also:

________________________________________________________________________

If my partner is using/drinking I can:

________________________________________________________________________

If my partner is forcing me to use/drink I can:

________________________________________________________________________

If I am dealing in order to access my drug of choice, I can do the following to increase my physical safety:

________________________________________________________________________

I might also:

________________________________________________________________________

If my partner is dealing, I can do the following to increase my physical safety:

________________________________________________________________________

I might also:

________________________________________________________________________

To safeguard my children I might:

________________________________________________________________________
Safety Planning for Women with Mental Health Issues

The stress of violence or threats is very hard on anyone, especially people who have mental health issues. You might stop being able to trust your judgment or sense of reality. Very often abusers tell their partners that they are crazy, or tell others that their partners are crazy. It can help to get some time alone or with a trusted individual to sort out what you’re experiencing.

Where can I go to get a break from my relationship and find my sense of reality again?

Who can I trust to help me?

I will remind myself that violence affects my stress levels and impairs my mental health so when I am in violent situations I need to be more watchful of my stress and mental health needs and remember to ask for help from:

The following events almost always increase my stress and have a negative effect on my mental wellbeing:

The warning signs that I am getting stressed and moving into crisis are:

and this is what I will do in these situations to try to keep myself well/balanced and to try to keep myself safe:

If I feel myself moving into a crisis state I can:

I can also:

I can call __________________________ for support when I feel emotionally distressed.

The following people/places/things can be unsafe for me:

To safeguard my children I might:

Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are:
If there are additional supports you require for your mental health or substance use issues such as:

- Phone numbers of supportive professionals
- Names and phone numbers of advocates
- List of medications

... then make sure these are stored with other important documents and items that you can take with you in crisis situations when you need to leave your home quickly.

**Think about:**

- Medications and prescriptions
- Information about services
- Names and phone numbers for case workers or other service providers who can help to coordinate services for you
- Health/life insurance papers
- Medical records

**Activity Question 8:** What parts of this plan work for you? What would you add?
Safety Planning for Sex Workers

Much of this information has been supplied by Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education (PACE) Society in Vancouver.

Tips for staying safer during sex work

• Try not to work when you are high or drunk as you may be more vulnerable to violence or not be able to respond as quickly to an escalating situation.

• Try not to use substances with your client—they may not be pure/safe. If it is a using date, bring your own gear.

• Wear shoes you can run in, or that you can slip off easily.

• Do not wear anything around your neck that an offender can use to strangle or drag you such as necklaces, scarves, etc.

• If possible carry a cell phone. You can call yourself and leave a message with a description of your date or text the license plate to a friend. Even if the phone does not work or is out of minutes, carry it with you in plain view, as an offender may be less likely to take a chance.

• Work with friends if possible and have them write down identifying information about your client (license plate, vehicle description, physical description). If you have to work alone, be creative and carry a piece of chalk with you to write down the license plate of your next client on the sidewalk or wall where you are standing. Always casually tell a client you have been seen leaving in their car and are expected back at a certain time.

• Carry a whistle. Some working women prefer to carry devices that can be used to protect themselves such as mace. However, it has been proven that such things can be turned against you at any given time. A whistle is safe, small, compact, legal and loud.

• If you are trans, disclosing your genitalia to a client in advance may reduce risk of violence.

• Be extra alert while on the street. Do not use headphones.

• Many communities have an agency that keeps a list and description of bad dates and their vehicles. Check this list regularly and report any violent or threatening experiences to the agency.

• Observe the client: Listen to his voice and observe body language. Listen to your intuition—if it does not feel right, there is a good chance it is not. Is he high? Is he drunk? Are you prepared to deal with him?
**Entering a Client’s Vehicle**

- Make sure the client is alone. More than one person increases your risks.
- Do a full circle around the car. Get the license plate number.
- Check behind the back seat to make sure that no one is hiding.
- Always check door handles before you get in to make sure they work.
- Make sure you know how to unlock the door before entering the car.
- Try to avoid vans, pickups, and SUVs, especially with tinted windows.

**Going Somewhere**

- Avoid bridges, tunnels and dimly lit unfamiliar places.
- Pick your own parking spots and hotels.
- Check the address. If the client says they are taking you to one place, but pulls up to another, this may not be all they are lying about.
- Do not enter a room if there is more than one person. If others show up, leave immediately.
- When you’re in a car or in a room, keep an eye on the exit at all times and do not let the customer block your access to it.
- It is safer for you to bring a client to your house and hide a friend in the closet than it is for you to go to the client’s house and have his friend hiding in the closet.
- After the date do a money drop as soon as possible. If you need to score, don’t take all your cash with you.
- Be aware of your body language. If people know you are broke, don’t advertise that you have cash and become a target.
Safety Planning for Women in Rural Areas

While women escaping violence in larger communities or cities may have access to a variety of services and programs, in small towns there may be limited resources available.

If you are from a rural community, take a few minutes to answer the questions below to add to your safety plan:

Is there a safe haven in town – a local business or agency where you could go to make calls?

Where is the nearest community that has a transition house or network of safe homes?

Is there someone who can give you a ride to that community? (remember that hitchhiking can increase your risk for other forms of violence)

Who can you call for help? (VictimLINK connects callers to anti-violence and support services in their area; translation services are available. Call 1-800-563-0808.)

Is there a safe place in the nearest town that you could make a call from if you couldn’t call from home?

Is it possible for you to stay safe from your abuser and still live in your home community? Remember that in remote or rural areas, vehicles are easily recognized, and your activities can be reported to the abuser.

Safe transportation is often hard to find in rural and remote areas where women have to travel long distances to access services and safety. Many women may be forced to hitchhike.

If you are planning to hitchhike, prepare a travel card and give it to family or friends before you leave your community. The travel card should include your full name, date of birth, hair/eye colour, height, weight, description of tattoos/birthmarks/scars, description of your clothing or any items you are wearing (purse etc.), destination, estimated date/time of departure and arrival, contact person from your community and your destination and a message with instructions of what to do if you do not arrive at your destination.

If you have to leave your community to access medical services, contact the office where you have an appointment and ask if transportation, accommodations or travel vouchers are available to you. In the north region, there is a Northern Health Transporter bus that travels regularly.

Activity Question 9: What are some of the things in your community that make it hard to stay safe? Is there anything you can do about them?
Next Steps: What Can You Do If You Have Been Assaulted?

All women who have been assaulted deserve support, whether or not the police are called. Talk to someone safe – a friend, a support worker, someone from your community. It’s important to break isolation, if possible.

Here are some of the free anti-violence services you may be able to access. You should also make sure you have the numbers for your local crisis line or anti-violence service if they exist in your community.

**VictimLINK**
1-800-563-0808, available 24/7
For deaf/hard of hearing: TTY 604-875-0885, or Text 604-836-6381
VictimLINK is a province-wide telephone help line for victims of relationship and sexual violence, and all other crimes. Workers provide information and referrals to all victims of crime, and crisis support to victims of relationship and sexual violence, including sexual assault, violence in relationships, elder abuse, and adult survivors of physical or sexual abuse.

Workers refer people to a network of community, social, health, justice and government resources, including victim services, transition houses, and counselling resources. They also provide information on the justice system, relevant federal and provincial legislation and programs, crime prevention, safety planning, protection order registry, and other resources as needed.

VictimLINK provides service in over 100 languages, including 17 North American aboriginal languages.

**Stopping the Violence (STV) Counselling Programs**
VictimLINK will help you find the service nearest you.
There are 100 Stopping the Violence Counselling programs in BC, funded by the provincial government. These programs provide free counselling and support (including information, referrals and in some cases, system liaison services) for women who have experienced sexual assault, violence in relationships, and/or childhood abuse.

**Stopping the Violence Outreach Programs**
VictimLINK will help you find the service nearest you.
There are 56 Stopping the Violence Outreach programs in BC, funded by the provincial government. These programs respond to the needs of women who have experienced or who are at risk of violence. Programs support women to identify and access the services they need including providing transportation when needed to relevant services. They provide counselling, referral to other community services and assistance with systems such as child protection and family court. As needed, they provide local transportation, accompaniment and advocacy.

**Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs (CBVAPs)**
VictimLINK will help you find the service nearest you.
There are 62 Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs across BC funded by the provincial government. These programs provide emotional support, information, referrals, justice system support and liaison services for survivors of sexual assault, violence in relationships and violence against children and youth. If you are thinking about involving the police, these programs are an extremely important resource to help you navigate the justice system.

**Sexual Assault Centres**
VictimLINK will help you find the service nearest you.
Sexual Assault Centres provide crisis intervention, hospital and police accompaniment, counselling and advocacy for women and girls dealing with sexual assault and historical child sexual abuse.
What Can You Expect if the Police Become Involved?

Many women are extremely reluctant to involve the police even when they need help to increase their safety. You may be reluctant to involve the police because

- You’ve had bad experiences with the police in the past
- You have outstanding charges
- You come from a country where the police are dangerous
- You belong to a group that has been mistreated by police. This includes Aboriginal people; gays, lesbians and trans people; people of colour; people working in the sex trade; people who buy or sell drugs.
- You have fought back in self-defense

According to the law in BC, the police have to investigate all complaints of relationship violence. All women, no matter who they are, have the right to the same protection from the police.

Successful court cases have proved that women working in the sex trade must be given full protection of the law. For example, if a client refuses to pay for a sexual act after he agreed to do so, this refusal means a sexual assault has occurred.

You may decide to call the police to report violence and/or a sexual assault. Other times, someone might hear what is going on and make the report without your knowledge.

However it happens, there are certain things to know when police are involved.

Victim Rights When You Are Assaulted or Stalked by Your Partner

When relationship violence happens and police attend, you have rights. The police should make sure that you will be safe after they leave. They, or victim services who work with the police, should offer you information about safety, including numbers for transition houses or shelters and information about protection orders or other supports that will help keep you safe. They should also treat you respectfully.

The system is very complicated so it is always a good idea to work with a victim service worker. A Community-Based Victim Service Worker is a good support if they are available in your community. Otherwise, Police-Based Victim Service Workers are also very helpful. Any of these workers will offer you support and information throughout the criminal justice process and explain your options along the way.
An Overview of How the Criminal Justice System Works

**Step 1:** When police attend, and there is a complaint made by you or another person that there has been an assault, they should take steps to keep you safe. This usually involves taking the offender to a remand centre. He or she will be held there until they before a judge or Justice of the Peace. This will often happen within 24 hours. At that time, the judge sets a date for the offender to hear the charges against him or her. Very rarely, and only if the offender has an extensive history of violence, the judge may decide it is too dangerous to release the offender. In that case he or she may remain in jail up until the time that the charges are laid.

**Step 2:** The police will investigate the case and make a Report to Crown. This report will probably include any statement that you or others made about the assault. As well, it will include any other evidence that was gathered.

Crown Counsel will decide if there is enough evidence to proceed with the charges. If Crown Counsel proceeds, the offender appears in court – sometimes that date is anywhere from 10 to 30 days after the assault – to hear the charges and to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. If he or she pleads guilty, a sentencing hearing is set. If he or she pleads not guilty, a trial date is set. It is important to note that the Crown Counsel represents the state, and is not a lawyer representing you.

**Step 3:** If there is a trial, you may be called as a witness. As the victim, you are not “charging the abuser” – only the Crown Counsel can do that; you are a witness. Crown Counsel will interview you before the trial. If you do not want to testify, Crown Counsel may subpoena you (give you a legal document that requires you to attend court).

**If You Have Been Arrested**

Sometimes when there has been an assault the police come and arrest both people—the abuser and the victim. Sometimes they even arrest the victim and let the abuser go. This happens for a lot of different reasons—if both people are drunk or high, if the victim fought back, or if the abuser is a good liar and convinces the police that he/she is actually the victim. If this happens to you, it’s very important to get help from a Community-Based Victim Assistance Program. These cases are very complicated, and can have some serious consequences.

“Don’t let someone tell you that charging someone when they have done you wrong is a bad thing.”

—PAVE project peer team member
Victim Rights after a Sexual Assault
If you have been sexually assaulted, there are some options that you have, including whether or not you want to report. If you decide to report, you can do so in various ways:

**Reporting directly to the police by calling 911**
Police will probably take you for a medical exam. Medical staff will give you medical attention and collect evidence (including documenting all injuries, collecting sperm and saliva samples, etc) if you want them to. This is an opportunity to get medication that will ensure that you do not get pregnant following a sexual assault and to get treated for sexually transmitted diseases. In large urban centres it is very possible that a nurse who is specifically trained to respond to sexual assaults will be assisting you. You have the right to medical treatment even if you decide not to report the assault to the police.

**Reporting the assault as a bad date**
This might be an option for you if there is that service in your neighbourhood. Please see the resources list for a few services in the province that provide this.

**Third Party Reporting**
Third Party Reporting is a way to provide information about a sexual offence anonymously to police. With a third party report, you give specific information about the offender and the assault to a trained support person. You could be helping to identify an individual who has assaulted other women too. To make a report, contact the Community-based Victim Assistance Program in your community. VictimLINK will help you find the service nearest you.
Sexual Assault Risk Reduction

In almost all cases of sexual assault, the attacker is someone who the victim already knows. These are some ideas for reducing the risk of sexual assault by someone you know or by a stranger.

- Be aware of locations and situations where assaults may occur and avoid them as much as possible.
- If you feel uncomfortable about a person or location, leave immediately.
- Observe details about suspicious people. Take note of a person’s size, coloring, hairstyle, facial hair, scars, tattoos, or accent in case you need to give a description later.
- List only your initials and last name in the telephone directory or on a mailbox, or don’t list your name at all.
- Install a peephole in your front door and never open the door for strangers or people that you think might hurt you.
- Avoid travelling alone; when you do, keep a cell phone nearby to dial 911 in case of emergency.
- While at home, keep all doors and possible entrances locked.
- Never tell a stranger or someone you think might hurt you that you are home alone.
- Find out which neighbours you can rely on for help.
- While walking be aware of your surroundings. Walk near the street in a well-lit area.
- Carry a noise-making device such as a whistle.

While driving:
- Keep your car in good working order and make sure you always have gas.
- Park in well-lit areas, close the windows and lock the doors at all times. When returning to your car, look underneath it and scan the inside of the car before entering it.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Use extra caution when using enclosed parking garages. Park in well-lit areas, close to an entrance/exit.

If you are followed:
- Drive/walk to an open business where you can ask for help.
- Don’t leave your car unless you are sure you can get to a safe place.

If you are attacked:
- Think as rationally as you can and evaluate your resources and options.
- Attract attention.
- Fight back if you can.
- Run.
- Seek support following the attack.
As we mentioned, most women are sexually assaulted by someone they know. Sexual assault usually happens in the victim’s or assailant’s home, or in a private space. Sexual assaults can also happen in places like emergency shelters, where women can be very vulnerable. These are some things that might help you stay safer, depending on the circumstances. It is important to remember that not all assaults are avoidable; no matter how you respond, the assault is not your fault.

• Know your sexual intentions and limits. You have the right to say no to any unwanted sexual contact.

• Communicate your limits firmly and directly. If you say “No,” say it like you mean it. Don’t give mixed messages. Back up your words with a firm tone of voice and clear body language.

• Don’t rely on “ESP” to get your message across. Don’t assume that your date will automatically know how you feel, or will eventually “get the message” without your having to tell him or her.

• Remember that some people think that drinking heavily, dressing sexy, or going to a date’s room indicates a willingness to have sex. Be especially careful to communicate your limits and intentions clearly in such situations.

• Listen to your gut feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or think you may be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.

• Don’t be afraid to “make waves” if you feel threatened. If you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity against your will, don’t hesitate to state your feelings and get out of the situation.

• Call out for help if you need to. If you are alone with the assailant, try to get to a place with more people around.
**Date Rape Drugs**

“Date rape drugs” like Rohypnol or GHB have gotten a lot of media attention. They have no taste, colour or smell, so they can be easily slipped into a drink. These drugs can take effect quickly, causing physical weakness and helplessness, and can make you pass out. If you are sexually assaulted under the influence of these drugs, you may not remember it afterwards, or you may only remember a few details.

These drugs are dangerous, but they’re not very commonly used in sexual assault. In fact, alcohol is the most common “date rape drug,” and any prescription or street drug can be dangerous if you’re with people you don’t know and trust. When you’re drinking or using drugs, you can stay safer if you make sure you’re with people you trust and make sure you know what you’re taking. These are some more tips that can help you stay safe.

**Be Aware:**
- Never leave drinks unattended
- Never accept drinks in open containers
- Do not take drinks from a punch bowl
- Watch the person preparing your drinks
- Don’t accept drinks from strangers

**Get help immediately if you have any of these symptoms:**
- You feel much more intoxicated than you normally would feel after drinking the same amount of alcohol
- You get extremely nauseous or dizzy
- You lose your peripheral vision
- You have heaviness in your arms and legs

**If you believe someone has been drugged:**
- Get him or her immediate medical attention
- Do not leave him or her alone for any reason
- Keep his or her beverage for drug testing
Safety Following a Sexual Assault

Seeking Medical Care

Even if you feel OK physically following a sexual assault it is important to get medical care. Most sexual assault survivors do not have serious or life-threatening injuries. Many survivors do not even have visible minor injuries. However, you should still be examined by a doctor or a nurse. You may be in shock, and you may have internal injuries that you don’t know about. The doctor or nurse can also make notes about any injuries you have, so that if you decide to report to the police you will have a record of what happened to you.

During a medical examination, the doctor or nurse can collect evidence, like sperm samples or stains on your body or clothing. This kind of evidence must be collected right away before it deteriorates.

You can also get treatment to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). A doctor or nurse can help you evaluate your risk of contracting various STDs and advise you about ways to protect yourself. One of the benefits of getting medical care very soon after a sexual assault is that you can prevent some STDs from developing.

If you are a female sexual assault victim and the assailant is male, the doctor or nurse can help you figure out whether you might be pregnant as a result of the assault, and they can advise you about your options. Women who get medical attention within three days after a sexual assault can be offered medication to reduce the risk of pregnancy. This medication is often referred to as the “morning after pill.” It doesn’t terminate a pregnancy, but it makes it less likely that a pregnancy will occur.

My Community

You can reduce isolation and increase your safety by getting connected to other women, programs and local resources. Knowing that you are not alone and that other women have also experienced abuse and have gotten free from it is a very powerful experience. Making connections with others increases your physical and mental health and can increase your safety. Having more people look out for your welfare is a good thing.

Spend some time thinking about what resources there are in your community. Is there a women’s centre, a church, a community centre, drop-in groups, someone you can have coffee with on a regular basis?

“It started slow. I didn’t want to talk about it, I was so embarrassed. It was a relief to know I wasn’t alone. It was a relief to know there was a way out.”

—PAVE project peer team members

Activity 10: Brainstorm a list of the resources and connections that you have in your community.
Are You Concerned That Someone Is Being Abused, But Don’t Know What To Do?

You may suspect abuse is happening to a neighbour, friend or family member, but do not know what to do or how to talk about it. You may worry about making the situation worse. Below you will find some of the warning signs and the steps you can take to help.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing violence against women. You can reach out to organizations in your community that support women at risk of abuse and those that can help abusers.

Warning Signs of Abuse

He...

• Puts her down
• Does all the talking and dominates the conversation
• Checks up on her all the time
• Tries to suggest he is the victim and acts depressed
• Tries to keep her away from you
• Acts as if he owns her
• Lies to make himself look good or exaggerates his good qualities
• Acts like he is superior and of more value than others in the home

She...

• Is apologetic, makes excuses for his behavior
• Is nervous talking when her partner is nearby
• Seems to be sick more often
• Tries to cover her bruises
• Makes excuses at the last minute about why she can’t meet you or she tries to avoid you on the street
• Seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is afraid
• Uses more drugs or alcohol to cope
The Danger May Be Greater If He...

• Is a victim of Residential School abuses or other historical trauma and has not received help.
• Has access to her and her children
• Has access to weapons
• Has a history of abusing her or others
• Has threatened to harm or kill her if she leaves
• Says “If I can’t have you, no one will.”
• Threatens to harm her children, her pets or her property
• Has threatened to kill himself
• Has hit or choked her
• Is going through major life changes (e.g. job, separation, depression)
• Is convinced she is seeing someone else
• Blames her for his problems
• Doesn’t seek support
• Watches her actions, listens to her telephone conversations, reads her mail, follows her
• Has trouble keeping a job
• Misuses drugs or alcohol
• Has no respect for the law
• Is a victim of Residential School abuses or other historical trauma and has not received help.

The Danger May Be Greater If She...

• Has just separated or is planning to leave
• Fears for her life and for her children’s safety
• Is in a custody battle, or has children from a previous relationship
• Is involved in another relationship
• Is pregnant
• Denies or minimizes the risk
• Has unexplained injuries
• Has no access to a phone
• Faces other obstacles (e.g. she does not speak English, is not yet a legal resident of Canada or lives in a remote area)
• Has no friends or family
• Is a victim of Residential School abuses or other historical trauma and has not received help
Note: As the vast majority of relationship violence in heterosexual relationships is male violence against women, we have used the pronouns “he” and “him” to indicate the abuser and “she” and “her” to indicate the survivor. We in no way want to minimize the reality of abuse in same sex relationships or the rare cases where men are abused by women.

Here Are Some Of The Ways You Can Help When You Recognize The Warning Signs Of Abuse

Talk to her about what you see and assure her that you are concerned. Tell her you believe her and that it is not her fault.

Encourage her not to confront her partner if she is planning to leave. Her safety must be protected.

Offer to provide childcare while she seeks help.

Provided your own safety is not at risk, offer your home as a safe haven to her, her children and pets. If she accepts your offer, do not let her partner in.

Encourage her to pack a small bag with important items and keep it stored at your home in case she needs it.

Encourage her to reach out for help from a community organization with expertise in this area. Either you or she can call Victim Link at 1-800-563-0808 to get information on services in your area of the province.

In an emergency call the police, or 911 if available in your area.

Adapted From:

How to Talk to Friends about Safety Concerns

Talking with a friend who may be at risk can be difficult, but it’s worth the effort. How do you do it? Be direct! Tell her you are worried and that her safety is important to you. She might not want your advice, but she will be glad to know you care. Remember that violence and abuse take away a woman’s power and control over her own life. It’s important to help your friend get her power back and not try to control what she does—even if you mean well.

- Let her know you’re concerned for her safety
- Validate her feelings
- Remind her it’s not her fault and that she’s not to blame
- Help her with a safety plan
- Encourage her to talk to someone who can help such as an anti-violence advocate
- Help her explore her options but be aware that it will be her choice about what she wants to do
- If she decides to do nothing right now, continue to support her

If she is using substances, and this is sometimes putting her at risk, these are some questions you can talk about with her:

- Where do you commonly use/drink?
- Who is around when you are using?
- Are you able to use/drink with safer people?
- Are you able to use/drink in less risky places?
- What can you do when your partner’s threatening or risky behaviour starts to escalate?
- Is there someone you can call if you need help?

Sometimes, you need to help your friend assess the immediate danger she is in. Asking these questions might help:

- Have you been injured?
- Does your partner have a weapon?
- Has your partner been violent in the past with you or with others?
- Has your partner tried to strangle you?
- Has your partner threatened to kill you, your children, him/herself?
- Has the violence escalated recently?

If your friend answers yes to any of these questions, she may be in very serious danger. Help her problem solve about next steps, as calmly and non-judgementally as possible.
Some Do’s and Don’ts Of Peer Support

Do’s
• Ask questions: Choose questions that will help her think about her situation—make sure not to ask questions just because you’re curious about details.
• Listen: Give her your full attention.
• Summarize: Repeat back what she has said to you to let her know you’ve heard her, and give her a chance to tell you if you’ve gotten it wrong.
• Give feedback: Express your observations or concerns clearly and sensitively, without judgement.
• Try not to influence her decisions.
• Give information: Tell her about some of her options and some of the services available.

Don’ts
• Don’t try to be a counsellor or therapist: Refer your friend to professional services if she needs more than peer support.
• Don’t make statements that you cannot guarantee, like “everything will be fine.”
• Don’t impose your own ideas, values and solutions.
• Don’t encourage her to be dependent on you, or get too involved (spending a lot of time with her, getting too emotionally involved, etc).
• Reduce your own risk as much as possible. For example, don’t confront the abuser in a way that puts you at risk. Get help in planning how to stay safe.

Activity Question 11: How can you support a friend who is staying in an abusive relationship? What would be the hardest part about supporting her? What support would you need for yourself in order to keep supporting her?
Part Three: Using the Toolkit for a Group

Notes for Facilitators
If you are using this Guidebook and DVD to facilitate a discussion about safety, we make the following suggestions:

**Photocopying**
If you have a guidebook for everyone, great! If not, please feel free to photocopy any of the pages that you want to. We suggest handing out the risk assessment guides and safety plans, and the resources pages.

**Tips and Tools for Creating a Safe Space**
Before you start these discussions, it’s important to make the space as safe as possible, so that everyone feels respected, heard and motivated to participate. A safe space means that:

1. Participants are physically comfortable.
   Are they warm? Are they hungry or thirsty? Do they have access to the bathrooms? Can they temporarily store their belongings securely?

2. The space is non-judgmental.
   Participants can speak freely and openly about issues, situations and concerns without fear of repercussions. Is their income assistance worker / social worker there? Will they get banned if they say they used before coming to the group? Can they swear and speak in their language of choice?

3. Participants have the ability to create guidelines.
   They have the ability to create ones that serve their needs rather than following existing rules imposed by others

4. Participants understand the roles and power structure.
   Who is facilitating? Why are they here? What types of decisions can they make? Who is listening? Who can they go see to get support?

The PAVE Project Peer Team Guidelines
- Hear it here? It stays here
- No blackmailing
- One person at time can speak
- Respect the right to privacy
- Show compassion
- No intentional harm
- Give people time and space to share
**Discussion Topics**

You might not be able to cover everything in one group. We suggest dividing up the topics into Context, Risk Assessment and Safety Planning and Resources, using the corresponding parts of this guide.

Throughout the Guidebook, there are Activities and Activity Questions to provoke thought and discussion about the topic. You can have group members think or write about these questions on their own as well as discussing them as a group.

There is also a page of questions designed to help promote discussion about the DVD (see below).

**Involving Support People with the Group**

Talking about these issues can put women in a vulnerable and emotional place. Having a trusted female community elder participate in or observe the group can be a good way to create safety and to ground the group and its process.

If you are leading a group, consider enlisting a peer intern from the community to co-facilitate or support you in running the group. Not only will this intern give you some much needed help for tasks such as buying food, photocopying, making phone calls, and sharing group leading tasks, but this will also help build capacity within your community. Providing leadership roles to women who have lived the life of the women you are trying to support is one of the strongest statements of hope and inspiration we can make. Her involvement will increase the credibility and relevancy of the work you are trying to do.

**DVD Discussion Questions**

After watching the DVD, there will be many things you can discuss with your group, or think about. Here are some questions to get you going. You can answer these in a large group or break into smaller groups so that everyone gets a chance to talk.

**Question 1: Risk**
Why was Joanie concerned? What would you guess were some of Lily’s risk factors?

**Question 2: Safety Plan**
What was the safety plan that Joanie and Lily had?

**Question 3: The Cell Phone**
Joanie was using her cell phone to track Lily. Is that realistic as part of a safety plan? How would your plan be different?

**Question 4: Community**
What were some of Lily’s community connections?
Part Four: Resources

BAD DATE LISTS

These are some of the agencies in BC that keep “bad date lists”—lists of people who have assaulted or threatened sex workers.

In Vancouver:

WISH Drop-In Centre
515-119 West Pender
604-669-9474

In Prince George:

Positive Living North
#1-1563 2nd Avenue
250-562-1172

Needle Exchange Clinic
1108 3rd Avenue
250-564-1727
Monday–Saturday, 1:00–7:00 pm
Mobile van also accepts reports: 250-960-9777
Wednesday–Saturday, 7:00 pm–1:00 am, and Sunday 6:00 pm–12:00 am

New Hope Society,
1046 4th Avenue
250-552-0890

In Victoria:

Prostitute Empowerment Education and Resource Society (PEERS)
1-744 Fairview Road
Late night numbers: 250-744-0171 or 250-388-5325 local 106
Daytime numbers: 250-744-7690 or 250-388-5325 local 106
MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Local Crisis Line
Your local crisis line number is listed on the first page of your White Pages, or call 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433). Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to connect to a BC crisis line without a busy or wait signal.

Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of BC
24 hours
1-800-784-2433
TTY: 1-866-872-0133

Centre for Suicide Prevention
Has a listing of crisis centres and on-line counselling services across Canada at http://www.suicideinfo.ca.

BC Mental Health Information Line
Information about mental health and mental health services: 1-800-661-2121 or 604-669-7600. See www.heretohelp.bc.ca/connectmeto/infoline.shtml.

SUBSTANCE USE RESOURCES

BC’s Alcohol and Drug Information Service
1-800-663-1441
TTY: 604-875-0885
This is an information and referral service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Vancouver Coastal Health
Addiction Services: a detailed list of services can be found at http://www.vch.ca/community/addictions.htm
The toll-free detox referral number: 1-866-658-1221

Fir Square
For pregnant substance-using women, Fir Square Combined Care Unit at BC Women’s Hospital and Health Centre. Women may self-refer at 604-875-2229 (ask for the “charge nurse”).

BC Nurseline Health Information and Advice
Toll-free telephone line staffed by registered nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Translation services are available in 130 languages. A pharmacist is also available through this line.
1-866-215-4700
TTY: 1-866-889-4700

Poison Control Centre
1-800-567-8911
24-hour emergency line. For information on medications and drugs; particularly helpful around overdoses.
SUPPORT GROUPS

In Vancouver/Lower Mainland:

**PACE SOCIETY**
Counselling, advocacy, education, court accompaniment for those involved or exiting the sex trade: 604-872-7657

**PEERS Vancouver**
Support programs and counselling for sex workers: 604-681-3044

**WISH (Women’s Information Safe Haven)**
Support services for female sex workers: 604-681-9244

**TRANSGENDER HEALTH PROGRAM**
Drop in and meal program for trans sex workers: 604-734-1514 ext. 4

**BOYS R US PROGRAM**
Drop in program for male and trans sex workers: 604-633-4200

**SHRA**
The Self-Help Resource Association of BC publishes a directory of support groups in the Lower Mainland for a number of concerns including mental health: 604-733-6186, www.selfhelpresource.bc.ca.

**Red Book**
The Red Book of Community Social Services offers a similar online listing (look up support groups in the subject listing): www.vcn.bc.ca/isv/redbook.htm.

LEGAL RESOURCES

Vancouver/Lower Mainland:

**Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS)**
Litigates test cases and seeks reform laws in all areas of law relating to economically, socially, physically and mentally disadvantaged people: 604-685-3425, www2.povnet.org/clas.

**Mental Health Law Program (part of CLAS)**
Provides free legal representation of patients at review panels under the Mental Health Act and Review Boards under the Criminal Code: 604-685-3425.