



24 HOUR *2011* Census Report

*A One-Day Look at Transitional Housing and
Children Who Witness Abuse Programs in BC*

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In Just One Day

On November 24, 2011, BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) conducted the 3rd annual 24 Hour Census of our member Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage and Children Who Witness Abuse programs across BC. The 24 Hour Census gives us an unduplicated count of how many people were helped, and how many people were unable to get help, in one day in programs for women and their children fleeing violence in BC.



In just one day, 1110 women, youth and children across BC were sheltered and supported by the 124 programs that participated in the 2011 census. Aside from providing support in-person, the Violence Against Women (VAW) programs received 1461 calls, emails and texts from people asking for support or wanting information about the programs. Advocates in the programs educated 305 people about violence against women and its' impacts on women, children and communities. **IN TOTAL, THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAMS TOUCHED THE LIVES OF 2876 PEOPLE, IN JUST ONE DAY!**

Despite helping and educating almost 3000 people in one day, 658 people were turned away, remained on waitlists or were otherwise unable to access the support they needed, mostly because programs simply do not have the resources to meet the demand for services in their communities. For example, one program shared that funding “has not increased in the almost 20 years it has been in existence – and yet, the need for this service has increased steadily.” Several other programs shared similar stories, saying that current funding levels barely cover the costs of rent and other basic expenses required to run the programs.

Violence Against Women programs support thousands each day – for women, youth and children fleeing violence, access to the programs can be the difference between life and death. One woman who accessed a Transition House program shared “If [the program] was not there for me [with] a safe place to stay I probably would not have left my 24-year abusive relationship.” But these programs are struggling to survive themselves, and they need your help to continue helping others in their times of need.

Women, Youth and Children Served

In just one day 1110 women, youth and children were supported and sheltered in Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage and Children Who Witness Abuse programs in BC that participated in the 24 Hour Census. Advocates in these Violence Against Women (VAW) programs offer professional, compassionate support when women, youth and children need it most. They share information about the dynamics of violence against women, the impacts it can have, and help people who use their services to make plans to keep themselves safer. The programs also provide community education to prevent violence against women from happening in the first place.



	Transition House	Safe Home	Second Stage	CWWA	TOTAL
No. of people served	489	19	233	369	1110

“MY PROGRAM OFFERS A SAFE WAY TO GARNER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PROVIDING A REPRIEVE (ALBEIT TEMPORARY) FROM THE ABUSE. IT IS MY EXPERIENCE THAT OFTEN IT IS THESE MOMENTS FREE FROM ABUSE THAT ENABLE WOMEN TO VIEW THEIR SITUATION IN A MORE PRAGMATIC WAY AND MAKE SOME PRETTY AMAZING AND RESOURCEFUL DECISIONS.” SAFE HOME ADVOCATE

Seeking Safety: Transition Housing Programs

741 women, youth and children were sheltered and supported by Transition House, Safe Home and Second Stage programs that participated in the 24 Hour Census on November 24, 2011



Transition House, Safe Home and Second Stage programs (often collectively referred to as Transition Housing programs) meet the immediate needs of women, youth and children fleeing violence by providing basic necessities like shelter and food and offering support and advocacy. These programs allow women the time and safety they need to identify their options and make choices in a caring environment. Women receive nonjudgmental support, as they navigate the complex issues that come about from experiencing violence.

"I CAN'T THINK HOW THE WOMEN WHO RUN [THE TRANSITION HOUSE PROGRAM] COULD TRY ANY HARDER TO HELP ME FEEL VALIDATED AND SUPPORTED IN EVERY WAY – FROM SIMPLE THINGS LIKE PAJAMAS, TO THE DEEP COMPLEX THINGS LIKE 'WHO AM I? WHAT AM I DOING THAT CAN CHANGE TO IMPROVE MY EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL STATE AND EVERYDAY LIFE?'"
WOMAN IN TRANSITION HOUSE PROGRAM

SAFE HOMES | Safe Home and Transition House programs meet the immediate needs of women fleeing violence. Safe Homes are community-based networks of private residences or rental units, usually located in rural and remote areas, and that provide emergency support and shelter for women fleeing violence for up to 5 days. This short stay is intended to give women time to weigh their options, which may include moving to a Transition House program in another community – not always an easy choice for women and their children who must leave their support networks in their own communities.

TRANSITION HOUSES | Transition House programs are safe and supportive environments where women can stay up to 30 days and access information, resources, services and referrals. These programs are usually based out of a residential home that an agency operates and involve communal living.

SECOND STAGE HOUSES | Second Stage programs provide longer-term (3-12 months) secure housing with some support, as women search for permanent housing. Women in Second Stage programs usually have their own suite/apartment. There are few Second Stage programs in BC. Without the option of Second Stage housing, and with limited affordable housing for women and their children on the market, some women are left with no housing after their short stay at Transition House or Safe Home programs. As a result, many women return to an abusive situation when they would have chosen not to if other options were available.

Making Connections: Children Who Witness Abuse Programs

Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs help youth between the ages of 3 and 18 who have witnessed abuse against their mother. On November 24th, 2011, CWWA programs in BC helped 369 youth and children to understand and cope with violence against their mother, and the effects of this violence on themselves. In just one day, CWWA programs supported and provided information to 96 mothers and non-abusive caregivers. And CWWA advocates, who are generally funded only part-time, say there are many more who go without support because they do not have the resources to meet the demand for their services.



“I BRING 15 YEARS COUNSELING EXPERIENCE... TO THIS CWWA WORK. THIS IS BY FAR THE BUSIEST WORK I’VE EVER HAD. THE PACE IS RELENTLESS AND THE POVERTY AND VIOLENCE IN THESE CHILDREN’S LIVES IS GRINDING. I PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT TO CHILDREN, MOTHERS AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS ALL DAY LONG AND YET MOST DAYS I GO HOME FEELING I HAVEN’T DONE ENOUGH.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

“THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE WHO BELIEVED ME. I AM REALLY GLAD YOU CAME TO OUR SCHOOL AND TALKED ABOUT VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY.” – YOUTH IN CWWA PROGRAM

Many CWWA advocates reach young people through the Violence is Preventable (VIP) program. Through the VIP program, advocates go into schools and talk with young people about healthy relationships and young people learn about services available to them if they have been impacted by violence directed at their mothers. On November 24, 2011 CWWA advocates reached 152 people in public education sessions – many of them through the VIP program. With no regular funding, the VIP program has been generously supported through the CKNW Orphans Fund the past two years.

“THE WORK THAT CWWA COUNSELLORS DO IS INVALUABLE AS IT REDUCES THE SERIOUS EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM THAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY ARE EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THE IMPACT OF THE STRESS AND FEAR IS DEBILITATING FOR MANY CHILDREN. WHEN OFFERED COUNSELING AND SUPPORT, CHILDREN AND YOUTH HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS AND LEARN ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION AND LIFE SKILLS.” – CWWA ADVOCATE



Reaching Out: Calls, Emails and Texts

Aside from supporting 1110 people in person, the programs participating in the 2011 24 Hour Census provided support and information through 1461 phone calls, emails and texts.

With the increasing use of social technologies, Violence Against Women (VAW) programs are finding more and more people inquiring about services, and asking for support, using emails and texts. These forms of communication can be less intimidating for people who may be hesitant to access supports, but for some women who live in rural and remote areas, phone calls, emails and texts may be the only way to get immediate support as getting to programs can be a challenge.

“THIS WORK IS SO IMPORTANT! WE NEVER TURN ANYONE AWAY, AND DO SOMETHING TO HELP EVERYONE THAT CALLS!” – SAFE HOME ADVOCATE

Of course, although women, youth and children are finding ways of using social technologies to access supports and plan for their safety, abusers are also finding new ways to use social technologies to monitor and control women. As a result, VAW advocates are asking for training to ensure that women are aware of how technology can be used to help, or harm, them. BCSTH provides this training, but with little room for professional development in their budgets, agencies are often left to fundraise to cover training expenses. With many programs forced to fundraise just to keep their programs going, training is not always a funding priority.

“WOMEN’S ISSUES CONTINUE TO BECOME MORE AND MORE COMPLEX. AS STAFF AGE IN THIS FIELD, NOT ALL ARE UP TO DATE ON COMPUTER SKILL NOR IS SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA TO THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN. TRACKING, BULLYING, ETC. AS THE ISSUE BECOMES MORE COMPLEX AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA GADGETS CONTINUE TO COME OUT, ONGOING EDUCATION IS NEEDED.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Standing Beside: Support and Advocacy

Programs for women and their children fleeing violence provide more than just safe shelter – in fact, 93 percent of all programs in the 2011 24 Hour Census reported that they spent most of their time on November 24 providing one-to-one support for women, youth and children who needed it. Aside from this one-on-one support and administrative duties, including planning for their work with women, youth and children, the VAW programs reported spending much of their time advocating for women and providing group support.

“ONE CHILD IS NOW FOCUSING ON HERSELF MORE THAN ON PLEASING OTHER PEOPLE. SHE DID AN ART PROJECT.... AND IT REFLECTED HER GROWING SENSE THAT SHE MATTERS AS AN INDIVIDUAL. I FEEL PRIVILEGED TO WITNESS A CHILD GROWING, TAKING NEW RISKS AND LETTING GO OF THE CRITICISM AND CONTROL SHE EXPERIENCED FROM THE ABUSER. SHE IS BLOSSOMING.”
– CWWA ADVOCATE

Often women who have experienced abuse have no choice but to try to navigate various government agencies as they attempt to secure safety for themselves and their children. For instance, due to the cost of housing in BC, many women must apply for Income Assistance to be able to afford safe housing away from an abuser. On November 24, 2011, VAW advocates reported advocating on behalf of women most often for appropriate child custody, financial support and housing. However, VAW programs advocate for women on an number of fronts, including helping women access support related to immigration, medical needs and legal information, to name a few.

Sharing Knowledge: Violence Prevention and Education

Violence Against Women programs provide support to women, youth and children who have experienced violence, but our longer-term goal is to prevent violence in the first place. In just one day in 2011, violence against women programs facilitated 46 public education sessions, teaching 305 people about violence against women and the impacts it can have on women, children and communities as a whole. Advocates share information about services in their communities, how to support friends or family members who may be experiencing violence and how people can join our efforts to end violence against women.

Unmet Needs

In just one day in November 2011, 658 people were unable to get help from violence against women programs that participated in the 24 Hour Census. The dedicated staff in Violence Against Women programs do as much as they can with what they have, but many cannot keep up with the demand for their services due to limited funding and staffing hours. As a result, women, youth and children who need help are put on lengthy waitlists or must access services in other communities. Not surprisingly, often women are hesitant to leave their own communities and support networks and, as a result, may not access support at all.

“REDUCING, AND HOPEFULLY ELIMINATING, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS OUR GOAL. WITH THE RIGHT FINANCIAL SUPPORT, WE CAN CREATE SAFER COMMUNITIES AND ENSURE THAT EVERY CHILD IS ABLE TO RECEIVE THE COUNSELING AND SUPPORT THAT WILL ENABLE HIM/HER TO LIVE A HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND PEACEFUL LIFE.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

	Transition House	Safe Home	Second Stage	CWWA	TOTAL
No. of people served	114	19	95	430	658

Operating Costs

Several programs shared with us that the funding provided to them by the provincial government barely covers basic operating expenses, such as rent, program supplies and food.

“THE CWWA PROGRAM FUNDING FOR THIS AGENCY HAS NOT INCREASED IN THE ALMOST 20 YEARS IT HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE – AND YET THE NEED FOR THIS SERVICE HAS INCREASED STEADILY.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

Because of funding limitations, advocates often put resources and time towards raising the profile of their organizations and fundraising that could be put towards providing services to those in need.

“WE NEED TO FUNDRAISE TO EVEN HAVE THIS PROGRAM.... WE SPEND HOURS AND VALUABLE HOURS FUNDRAISING... JUST TO KEEP OUR DOORS OPEN! WE USE CRAPPY DISCARDED CELL PHONES, HAND ME DOWN COMPUTERS THAT CONK OUT ALL THE TIME, THE CHEAPEST INTERNET PROVIDERS THAT CAN NEVER HELP US WHEN WE NEED IT. WE SHARE OFFICE SPACE WITH OTHER COORDINATORS AND HAVE NO PRIVACY FOR DROP IN CLIENTS. AS THE COORDINATOR, I GET 7 HOURS A WEEK TO RUN THE PROGRAM, AND COULD DO 21, EASILY.” – SAFE HOME ADVOCATE

Staffing

Many of the programs that participated in the 2011 24 Hour survey reported that current funding levels do not provide for enough staffing to keep up with the demand for services or to provide safe and meaningful services to women, youth and children fleeing violence.

Each program is unique, generally speaking though, Safe Home programs are funded with only a part-time coordinator, although she is on call 24/7 and will respond when women are in crisis even if she has already exceeded her hours. Not surprisingly,



volunteers are essential in Safe Home programs. Children Who Witness Abuse advocates are also, generally, funded for part-time hours and, as a result, most have waitlists preventing young people from accessing timely support.

“THE SAFE HOME COORDINATOR POSITION IS A ½ TIME POSITION ONLY, HOWEVER, THE SAFE HOME COORDINATOR CARRIES A CELL PHONE BEYOND THESE HOURS IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY CALL-OUT SITUATION.” – SAFE HOME ADVOCATE

“WE CONTINUALLY RUN A WAITLIST FOR OUR CWWA PROGRAM [WHICH SERVES 3 COMMUNITIES] OF 10 TO 20 CHILDREN/YOUTH AT ANY GIVEN TIME.9 HOURS A WEEK IS NOT ENOUGH TO SERVE 3 COMMUNITIES CONSIDERING THE NEED AND ALSO THE TIME IT TAKES TO DRIVE BETWEEN THEM.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

Transition House programs run 24/7 and usually have only one staff person on at a time who responds to crisis calls, maintains the physical space and provides support to anywhere from 1-30 women, youth and children depending on how much physical space is in the House. Second Stage programs are not much different, although women often have their own suite. It’s no wonder that VAW advocates say there isn’t enough time to fully meet the needs of women, youth and children who need their help.

In addition to programs feeling generally understaffed, there is often high staff turnover since current funding levels make it difficult to adequately compensate advocates for the demanding, complex, and sometimes dangerous, work they do. VAW advocates wear many different hats – they do everything from dealing with and diverting crises, providing one-to-one or group support, making referrals, connecting to other community supports, transporting people to and from appointments, house maintenance or providing childcare when women need it (to name just a few of their duties!). The work can be difficult, emotionally taxing and downright exhausting and, unfortunately, these factors are not generally reflected in the pay.

“APPROPRIATE PAY WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. I MAKE LESS MONEY THAN MOST OF THE PEOPLE I KNOW, YET NONE OF THEM HAVE TO WEAR A PANIC BUTTON AROUND THEIR NECK AT THEIR JOBS!” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

“WE NEED ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SERVICES TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN STAYING WITH US. THIS INCLUDES DOUBLE STAFFING FOR SAFETY REASONS. WE CURRENTLY DO NOT HAVE THE FUNDING TO DO THIS.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Even with the complex nature of the work and the less than stellar pay, Violence Against Women advocates shared hundreds of messages about how meaningful and valuable their work is to them.

“I HAVE WORKED HERE FOR 5 YEARS... I HAVE NEVER TAKEN A SICK DAY AND I COME TO WORK EACH DAY EXCITED TO SEE THE WOMEN, CHILDREN AND MY CO-WORKERS.” – SECOND STAGE ADVOCATE

There is no question that Violence Against Women advocates are passionate about their work, but Program Coordinators say they often lose committed staff who are unable to house and feed their own families with the wages they are paid.

“IT IS AMAZING TO HAVE SUCH GREAT STAFF DEDICATED TO THE WORK AND FRUSTRATING THAT WE CANNOT PAY THEM A COMPETITIVE WAGE; WE END UP LOSING GREAT STAFF.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Transportation

“TRAVEL IS USUALLY AN ISSUE WITH FAMILIES WHO HAVE GONE THROUGH ABUSE. MANY OF THE INDIVIDUALS ARE GETTING BACK ON THEIR FEET AND ARE IN A FINANCIAL BATTLE. IN THE NORTH, WALKING IS NOT ALWAYS AN OPTION. GETTING CHILDREN TO APPOINTMENTS CAN BE ADDED STRESS.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

In environments where programs are struggling to cover overhead expenses and there are limited staff, things like helping women, youth and children get to safe shelter or CWWA appointments are seen as luxuries. Many programs cover large areas of the province and with limited staff to provide transportation, and limited public transportation outside of BC’s urban centres, it can be difficult for women, youth and children to get to the help they need.

Some women may not have vehicles and for those who do, driving may not be an option: the abuser may maintain control over the family vehicle, women may be concerned that the abuser or other people they know may see their vehicle at the Violence Against Women program and winter conditions can make roads in the north impassable. While some programs provide transportation for women to get to and from the program or, alternatively, have outreach workers who can travel to women and children, many other programs do not have the funding or the resources to provide transportation.

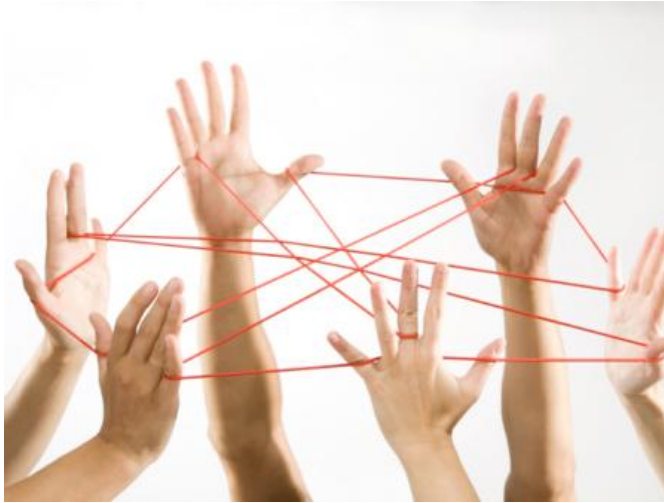
Training

“THE NATURE OF THE NEEDS THAT FALL UNDER THIS SERVICE MANDATE ARE DIVERSE, UNPREDICTABLE AND EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO MANAGE... MORE RESOURCES TO TRAINING AND SUPPORT STAFF IN THIS DIFFICULT WORK IS NECESSARY.” – SAFE HOME ADVOCATE

“CUTTING TO TRAINING DOLLARS HAVE IMPACTED OUR ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING OUTSIDE OF OUR OWN COMMUNITY... AS JUST THE COST OF FLYING OUT OF NORTHERN COMMUNITIES IS PROHIBITIVE.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

Programs participating in the 24 Hour Census also report a great need for increased funding for adequate training to meet the complex needs of women, youth and children fleeing violence. Access to basic training and other professional development opportunities can be especially challenging for communities in remote areas where services are few and far between. In these communities, qualified trainers must be flown in, or staff members flown out to professional development opportunities, which usually take place in more urban hubs. Advocates shared that the difficulty accessing training is impacting services to women, youth and children fleeing violence, as staff sometimes feel ill-equipped to support women and children through the complex effects of abuse.

Long-Term Housing and Supports



Needless to say, it is not always easy for women, youth and children who have experienced violence to access the supports they need, and those who provide services experience various challenges as well. But, even when women, youth and children are able to access supports, CWWA and Transition Housing programs are only short-term services.

“IT IS A COMMON MYTH IN OUR SOCIETY THAT ONCE A WOMAN LEAVES AN ABUSIVE

PARTNER, SHE AND HER CHILDREN ARE FINE AND CAN MOVE ON WITH THEIR LIVES. STAFF AT SECOND STAGE, TRANSITION HOUSE AND CHILDREN WHO WITNESS ABUSE PROGRAMS KNOW THAT THIS IS FAR FROM TRUE. NOT ONLY IS IT THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE ABUSIVE PARTNER, EMOTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES CONTINUE OVER THE LONG TERM.” – SECOND STAGE ADVOCATE

There are other violence against women’s programs funded by the Province that are also experiencing wait lists and pressures on their programming. Since not all Transition Housing or CWWA programs are funded to provide outreach, there is often little support as women and their children move on from these Violence Against Women programs. The overall lack of resources for violence against women programs means that women, youth and children do not always feel ready to leave the Transition Housing or CWWA programs they have built support networks in.

“[WOMEN NEED A] TRANSITIONAL WORKER TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO WOMEN WHEN THEY LEAVE THE PROGRAM. WHEN THEY ARE IN THE TRANSITION HOUSE, THEY RECEIVE WRAP AROUND SUPPORT, BUT ONCE THEY LEAVE THEY ARE ON THEIR OWN. THIS CAN BE OVERWHELMING; THEY HAVE NO ONE TO ASSIST THEM TO OVERCOME THE BARRIERS OR CHALLENGES THEY FACE WHEN THEY ARE ON THEIR OWN. – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Advocates also expressed great concern with the lack of affordable housing available to women who are hoping to find safe shelter of their own. Women staying in Safe Home and Transition House programs have only 5 and 30 days, respectively, to find housing if they wish not to return to the environment they were in. With low vacancy rates across the province, finding vacant, safe and affordable housing can be a challenge.



“THERE NEEDS TO BE SOMETHING DONE ABOUT THE HOUSING SITUATION, THE FACT THAT IT GETS DOWN TO -20 [DEGREES] AND COLDER AND WE HAVE PEOPLE SLEEPING ON THE STREETS IN BASEBALL DUGOUTS AND CRAMMED INTO SHEDS AND CAMPERS IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE. HOW ARE PEOPLE EVEN SUPPOSED TO BEGIN LOOKING AT THEIR SUBSTANCE USE OR MENTAL WELLNESS WHEN THEIR VERY BASIC NEEDS ARE NOT BEING TAKEN CARE OF?” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

“WE HAVE ZERO VACANCY RATE FOR HOUSING IN OUR COMMUNITY WITH LONG WAITLISTS. WE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF SECOND STAGE OR LOW-INCOME HOUSING.” – SAFE HOME ADVOCATE

Often, women do not earn enough to afford housing for themselves and their children on their own. In this case, women need to apply for government Income Assistance, but the process can take much longer than the mere days that women have before they must move on from Transition Housing programs, and government employees are generally not trained about, nor sensitive to the needs of, women who may still be at risk of violence. Women who have no immigration status in Canada are not eligible for Income Assistance at all, and sometimes literally have nowhere else to turn but to Transition Housing programs.

“HELPING WOMEN WITHOUT STATUS IS A MAJOR CONCERN. WHERE DO THESE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN GO AFTER THEIR STAY? AT PRESENT, SECOND STAGE OPTIONS ARE SOMEWHAT LIMITED, SO WOMEN GET STICK IN THE TRANSITION HOUSE SYSTEM WITH NO MONEY, MEDICAL CARE, RESOURCES IN GENERAL.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

BC Housing has developed a ‘Priority Placement’ program for their low-income housing providers to use to prioritize women and their children fleeing violence. Women are often hesitant to get involved in the program, however, because enrolment requires the collection of sensitive information. Women fear that this information could get in the wrong hands and lead the abuser to learn of their whereabouts. In addition, housing providers are not required to use the list, so women could be putting themselves at risk for no benefit at all. In fact, in some cases, housing providers outright discriminate against women fleeing violence, worrying that the abuser will cause damage to the property the woman is renting.

“IT’S SO FRUSTRATING THAT SO MANY OF OUR CLIENTS ARE HOMELESS AND BECAUSE OF THE HOUSING SITUATION IN TOWN NOW THEY ARE UNABLE TO FIND HOUSING. THE LANDLORDS IN TOWN SEEM LIKE THEY DON’T HAVE TO FOLLOW THE SAME RULES AS THE REST OF THE PROVINCE, DEMANDING WOMEN PAY MORE THAN HALF OF ONE MONTHS RENT AS A DAMAGE DEPOSIT. IT’S JUST HARD SUPPORTING WOMEN TO FIND SAFER, AFFORDABLE HOUSING WHEN THAT JUST DOESN’T SEEM TO EXIST IN OUR COMMUNITY RIGHT NOW AND THEY DON’T WANT TO LEAVE THE TOWN, THIS IS WHERE THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Second Stage programs that support and shelter women and their children, usually after a woman has accessed a Transition House program, offer women an additional 3-12 months to explore their options and find housing. But there are not enough of these programs available across BC to meet the demands of women and children who could use the extra support. To find safe and affordable housing, then, many women must relocate to another community, leaving the support networks they and their children have developed.

“WE HAVE NEXT TO NO AVAILABLE HOUSING OF ANY KIND IN THIS COMMUNITY. ABUSED WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO LEAVE THEIR COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND MOVE TO A SMALL TOWN AN HOUR AWAY THAT HAS AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE HOUSES, BUT FEW RESOURCES AND NO TRANSPORTATION TO SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THIS COMMUNITY. THE ONLY OTHER ALTERNATIVE IS TO RETURN TO LIVE WITH THEIR ABUSER. MANY WOMEN HAD NO CHOICE BUT THIS.” –TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

“ONE OF THE ISSUES THAT COMES UP TIME AND AGAIN IS THE LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN OUR COMMUNITY. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR WOMEN TO CHANGE THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES IF THEY AND THEIR CHILDREN DO NOT HAVE A PLACE TO GO. IT IS HARD TO RELOCATE TO ANOTHER COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY IF THE CHILDREN ARE ENROLLED IN THE LOCAL SCHOOLS, OR IF SHE HAS A JOB AND FAMILY/FRIENDS HERE THAT PROVIDE SUPPORT ETC.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

Too Much to Ask?

Advocates in Violence Against Women (VAW) programs face a number of challenges providing services, mostly linked to limited resources. But they know that women, youth and children face an even tougher uphill battle to find safety and support, often experiencing additional stress due to the service constraints they experience in VAW programming.



“THE STRUGGLE TO GATHER ENERGY TO LEAVE A CONFINING ABUSIVE SITUATION, ... TO CREATE A HOME, STRUCTURE, WELLNESS, ROUTINE, HER OWN HEALTH AND WELLNESS THEN ALSO DRIVE HER CHILD TO APPOINTMENTS, ENSURE HER OTHER CHILDREN HAVE CHILDCARE AND THEN DO IT WITHIN THE CONFINES OF AVAILABILITY AND PROGRAM HOURS IS REALLY TOO MUCH TO ASK.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

With the support of their community members, municipal, provincial and federal governments, however, VAW programs can ensure that women, youth and children can get timely and meaningful support when they need it most.

Community Support

Violence Against Women programs participating in the 2011 24 Hour Census received \$12,366 from their community to support their programming. In addition, 76 “in-kind” donations were received, ranging from volunteers cooking, cutting hair or hosting painting classes, to gifts of bedding, clothing and food.

“OVER THE LAST 24 HOURS ONE OF THE HOUSE CLIENTS MOVED INTO A SAFE HOME. FOUR VOLUNTEERS FROM THE COMMUNITY CAME FORWARD TO HELP SUPPORT HER MOVE HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND TRANSPORTATION.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Because donations are often made on an annual basis, it’s difficult to make assumptions from just one day. This survey happened during the holiday season, so programs may have actually received more donations on that day than they would generally throughout the year. Still, one thing is for sure – many programs could not provide the services they do without the generosity of community members. Contact your local Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage or Children Who Witness Abuse program today to find out how you can help women, youth and children in their time of need.

Violence Against Women Programs Save Lives

Despite the many challenges Violence Against Women programs come up against, the programs that participated in this survey were able to shelter and support 1110 women, youth and children who had experienced violence in just one day. These essential programs help people when they need it most, providing a safe and supportive environment and helping rebuild lives.

“SUPPORTING THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF CHILDREN DEEPLY IMPACTS FUTURE GENERATIONS, MONETARILY AND HOLISTICALLY – ANY SOCIAL PROGRAM FORESIGHT NEEDS TO BE FOCUSED ON THE POPULATION OF CHILD SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE.” – CWWA ADVOCATE

“TODAY, WE TOOK A WOMAN IN TO THE HOUSE WHO CLEARLY HAD MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, INCLUDING PARANOIA. SHE WAS THE ELEVENTH CLIENT IN A TEN-BED FACILITY. SHE HAD BEEN WALKING AROUND HOMELESS FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS IN THE SNOW WITH LEAKY BOOTS. HER FEET WERE PURE WHITE FROM THE ROAD SALT AND SHE COULD BARELY WALK. ... HER STORY OF HISTORIC ABUSE WAS HORRIFIC AND HEARTBREAKING... WE COULD HAVE SAID WE WERE FULL, OR THAT SHE WAS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF OUR PROGRAM, BUT WE DID NOT. SHE WAS SO GRATEFUL FOR STAFF WHO WOULD HEAR HER STORY AND NOT SEND HER TO THE PSYCH WARD. WE WILL TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME, KEEPING HER WARM AND SAFE AND FED. MAYBE THAT WILL BE ENOUGH TO KEEP STABLE FOR LONG ENOUGH TO BUILD TRUST AND GET HER THE SUPPORTS SHE SO BADLY NEEDS.” – TRANSITION HOUSE ADVOCATE

Unfortunately, for every two women, youth or children who are helped in one day in Violence Against programs in BC, another woman, youth or child is turned away. More resources are needed to provide adequate staffing, service hours and transportation to ensure that people can get the help they need to live free from violence.

“THIS PLACE HAS SAVED MY LIFE, MY SOUL. I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL.” – WOMAN IN TRANSITION HOUSE PROGRAM

“IF IT WASN’T FOR A PLACE LIKE THIS, WOMEN LIKE MYSELF MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO LEAVE AND HAVE TO STAY IN ABUSIVE SITUATIONS. I WISH, AND WILL PRAY, THAT THE GOVERNMENT FUNDS HOUSES LIKE THIS WITH MORE MONEY.” – WOMAN IN TRANSITION HOUSE PROGRAM

To find out more about the work and needs of Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage and Children Who Witness Abuse programs in your community, and across the province, contact your local program or visit the BC Society of Transition Houses website www.bcsth.ca