



24 Hour 2012 Census Report

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



BC Society of
Transition Houses

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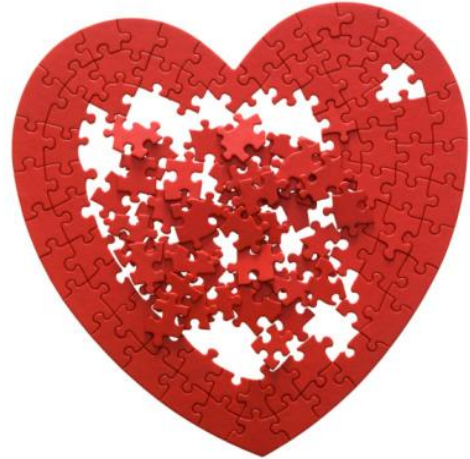
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IN JUST ONE DAY

On November 27th, 2012 **3435 people were supported, sheltered and educated through Transition Housing and Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs across BC.**

Unfortunately, an additional **663 people were still waiting for services or had to be turned away from these programs**, due in large part to limited space, program hours and resources to support women with greater needs. **136**

Transition House, Safe Home, Second and Third Stage and Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs in BC participated in the 4th annual BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) 24 Hour Census. The Census provides an unduplicated count of how many women, youth and children were helped, and how many more were unable to get help, during just one day in Transition Housing and CWWA programs in BC.



During the 24-hour period in Transition Housing and CWWA programs in BC:

- 864 women, youth and children were supported and safely sheltered in Transition Housing programs
- 345 women, youth and children were helped in-person in CWWA programs
- 1449 calls, emails and texts were responded to providing information and support
- 772 people were educated about the dynamics and effects of violence against women through training, workshops and public presentations

We congratulate these 136 Transition Housing and CWWA programs for the difference they are making in thousands of lives each day! Still, Transition Housing and CWWA programs in BC are not able to help everyone who is in need. Hundreds of people who need safety, compassion and support are not able to get it. Even the women, youth and children who are helped face systemic challenges to living free from violence, including a lack of safe and affordable housing in many BC communities and lengthy application processes for Income Assistance which would make safe housing more attainable.

With thousands of women, youth and children in need of support every day, it is clear that there is still much work to be done to stem the epidemic of violence against women in BC. To achieve this, Transition Housing and CWWA programs need community members, municipal, provincial and federal governments to collaborate on prevention efforts and provide adequate resources so that every woman, youth and child who is affected is able to get the help they need.

Thank you to all the advocates at the 136 Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage, Third Stage and Children Who Witness Abuse programs who took time out of their busy days to participate in the 2012 24 Hour Census. We appreciate all that you do!

WOMEN, YOUTH AND CHILDREN SERVED

In just one day, 1209 women, youth and children were helped through Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage, Third Stage and Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs in BC. Advocates in these programs listen, talk with and provide information and support after experiences of violence. In addition to supporting people through the various effects of violence against women, many programs engage in public education aimed at preventing violence against women as well.



| | Transition Housing Programs | CWWA Programs | TOTAL |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------|
| No. people helped | 864 | 345 | 1209 |

SEEKING SAFETY: TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS

864 WOMEN, YOUTH AND CHILDREN RECEIVED COMPASSIONATE CARE AND SHELTER IN TRANSITION HOUSE, SAFE HOME, SECOND STAGE AND THIRD STAGE PROGRAMS IN BC ON NOVEMBER 27TH, 2012.



Transition House, Safe Home, Second Stage and Third Stage programs (collectively referred to as Transition Housing programs in this report) meet the immediate needs of women, youth and children who have experienced violence. These programs provide safe shelter but also offer nonjudgmental support, information and advocacy for people coping with the effects of violence against women.

| | Transition House | Safe Home | Second Stage House | Third Stage House | TOTAL |
|---|------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|
| No. people helped in-person & sheltered | 564 | 61 | 196 | 43 | 864 |

"Thank God there is someone that will listen, understand and believe in me. I now know I am not going crazy." – Woman in Safe Home program

Safe Homes | Safe Homes are community-based networks of private residence or rental units that meet the immediate needs of women and their children fleeing violence. They are usually located in rural and remote areas and provide emergency support and shelter for up to 5 days. Staff and volunteers, who work part-time or on an on-call basis, provide women with support and information as they weigh their options, which may include moving to a Transition House program in another community. The resourceful advocates working or volunteering in Safe Home programs often see people with wide ranging and complex needs due to the general lack of services in rural and remote areas.

“Safe Homes programs have been funded according to having volunteer support. In this day and age, with the complexity of issues presenting, it is not safe or healthy to have this offered from a volunteer basis. On call teams need to be paid staff with appropriate training and funds for that training.” – Safe Home Advocate



Transition Houses | Transition Houses, like Safe Homes, meet the immediate needs of women and their children fleeing violence. These programs provide a safe and supportive environment where women and their children can stay up to 30 days. In addition to ensuring that the basic and practical needs of women and their children are met, advocates in Transition House programs offer nonjudgmental information, resources, support and referrals. Usually based out of a residential home that an organization operates, these programs involve communal living.

"The amazing support from staff. The feeling of being safe and cared for here. The amount of help I received. The feeling of comfort in the house. Everyone went above and beyond for my daughter and I. I honestly cannot think of one single thing I would change here. Thank you all for giving me the strength to live a safe & happy life with my daughter!" – Woman in Transition House program

Second and Third Stage Houses | Second and Third Stage programs offer longer-term (3-18 months) secure housing with some support, as women search for permanent housing. Women in Second and Third Stage programs usually have a suite or apartment to themselves. There are few Second or Third Stage programs in BC, although these and other forms of supportive housing are in high demand as many women struggle to find safe and affordable housing while dealing with the effects of violence within the 30-day stay in Transition Housing programs.

TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAMS RESPONDED TO 1129 CALLS, EMAILS AND TEXTS ON NOVEMBER 27TH, 2012. THAT'S AN AVERAGE OF 47 CALLS, EMAILS AND TEXTS AN HOUR!

MAKING CONNECTIONS: CHILDREN WHO WITNESS ABUSE PROGRAMS

282 CHILDREN AND YOUTH LEARNED THAT VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR MOTHER OR OTHER FAMILY MEMBER IS NOT THEIR FAULT ON NOVEMBER 27TH, 2012.



Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs help youth between the ages of 3 and 18 who have witnessed violence towards their mother. In just one day, CWWA programs supported 282 youth and children and another 67 adults to understand and cope with the effects of the violence. Due to funding constraints, most CWWA programs operate on a part-time basis and as a result, many children and youth face wait times before they are able to get help.

The number of people waiting for help from CWWA programs (426) was greater than those helped (349) on November 27th, 2012.

“Children and families are our future, to have people be more self sufficient, and to be open to greater opportunities, these services need to be financially supported in better ways AND run as fulltime programs.” – CWWA Advocate

CWWA advocates reach out to young people in schools through the Violence is Preventable (VIP) program. Through this program, advocates educate young people and school staff about healthy relationships and the resources available to youth who may have experienced or witnessed violence against women. With no core funding, the VIP program has been generously supported through the CKNW Orphan's Fund the last three years.

CWWA PROGRAMS RESPONDED TO 320 CALLS, EMAILS AND TEXTS ON NOVEMBER 27TH, 2012.

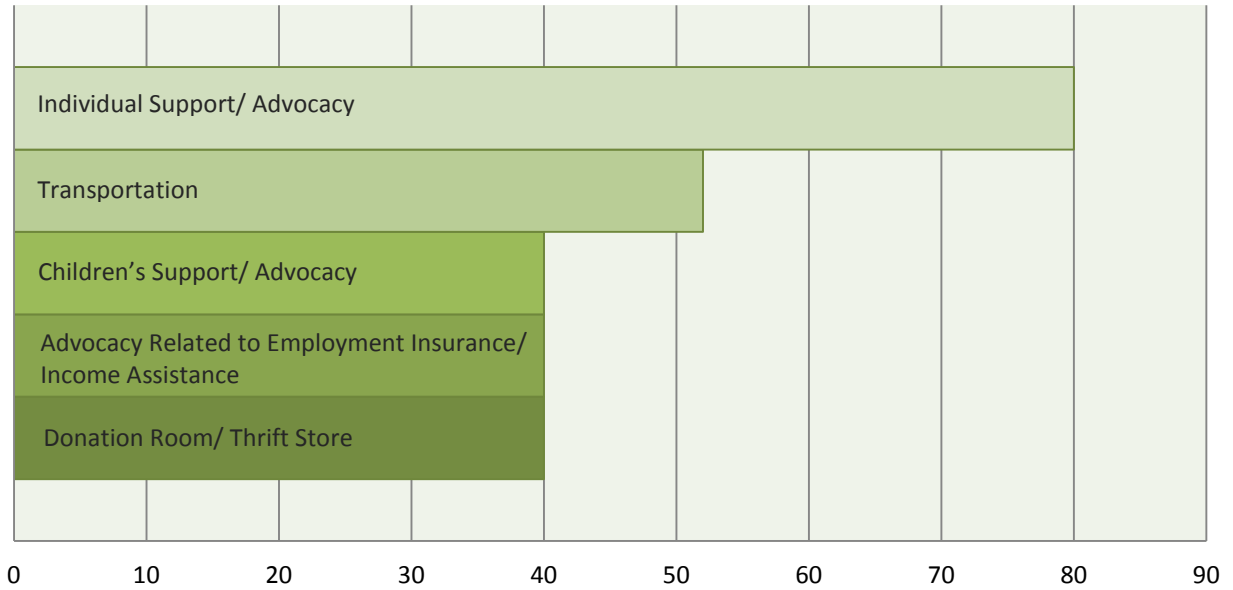
STANDING BESIDE: SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

“We continuously work hard on advocacy to support our clients with housing, Ministry of Social Development and legal issues. At times because of the lack of services it is difficult to actually provide counseling on [Violence Against Women]!” – Transition House Advocate

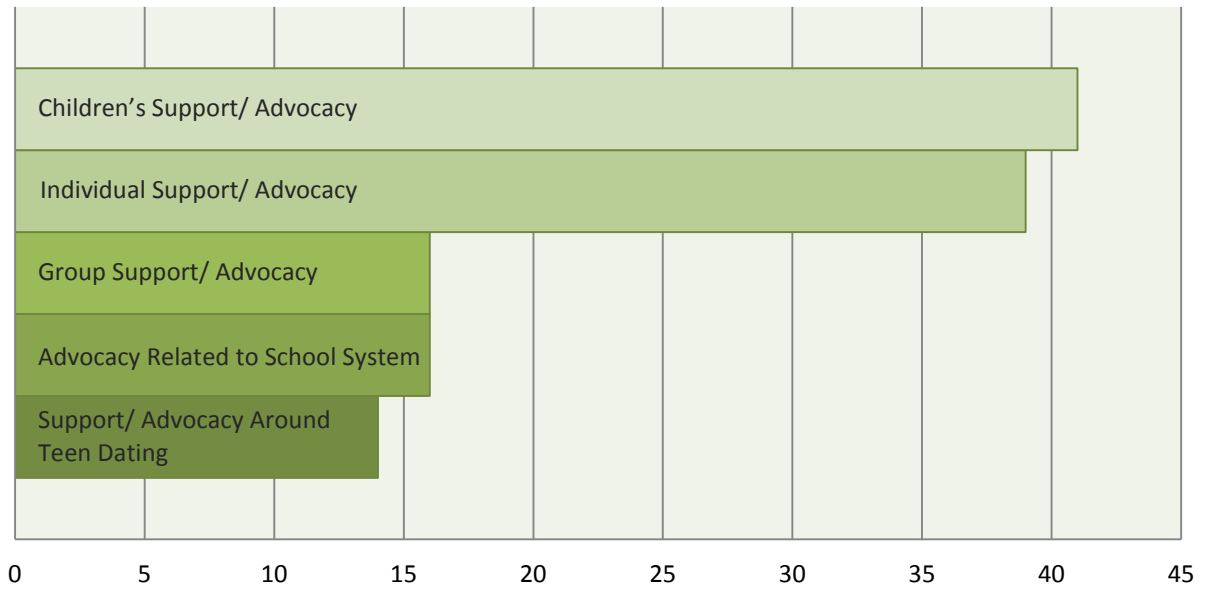
Individual support and advocacy for women, youth and children was the activity most frequently engaged in by Transition Housing and CWWA programs on November 27th, 2012. Advocates help people understand the dynamics of violence against women, but also to navigate the various systems and government agencies that women who have experienced violence may come in to contact with (for example, legal aid, housing, income assistance, child custody or protection). Advocates know that the various dynamics of violence against women are often not considered in the policies, processes or physical location of these systems and work with women to achieve their desired outcome while minimizing the risk of further violence from the abuser.



TOP 5 TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DURING 24 HOUR CENSUS



TOP 5 CWWA ACTIVITIES DURING 24 HOUR CENSUS



SHARING KNOWLEDGE: VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION



While not often part of a program's core funding, Violence Against Women programs find various ways to work towards raising awareness about, and ultimately preventing, violence against women. On November 27th, 2012, Transition Housing and CWWA programs offered 40 public education sessions. Some of the education sessions included staff trainings, public art displays, small school presentations and bringing in internationally renowned speakers. All together, the programs reached 772 people in just one day through their education efforts.

UNMET NEEDS

In just one day, 663 people were still waiting for services or had to be turned away due, in large part, to limited space, program hours and staffing in Transition Housing and CWWA programs in BC. CWWA programs and Second Stage programs were in the highest demand.

'[O]ur Transition House does not have a full time child and youth worker so this makes it difficult to help mom with issues at hand.' - Transition House Advocate

| | Transition House | Safe Home | Second Stage | Third Stage | CWWA | TOTAL |
|---|------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|------|-------|
| No. people turned away/ waiting for help | 71 | 1 | 162 | 3 | 426 | 663 |

| Top Transition Housing Program Reasons For Not Serving Women, Youth & Children | Top CWWA Program Reasons For Not Serving Women, Youth & Children |
|--|--|
| Not enough resources to support women with varying levels of mental wellness & substance use | Waitlist |
| No available rooms, suites or money for hotel stay | Not enough funding for program |
| Waitlist | No childcare |
| Not enough funding for program | Not enough staff |
| No childcare | No funds for transportation |

INTERSECTING NEEDS REQUIRE COORDINATED SUPPORT EFFORTS

The stress and fear stemming from violent experiences can lead to chronic health problems and affect levels of both mental and physical wellness. Research in BC has shown that many women seeking support around mental wellness and substance use have experienced violence in their lives. For some women, mental wellness and/or substance use may change as a means of coping with violence and the feelings that arise from those experiences. Due to the way our services are designed to deal with one area at a time, many women with intersecting experiences of varying levels of violence, mental wellness and substance use have a difficult time accessing services.

Women who are able to access services may be discouraged from talking about the varying needs they may have.

BCSTH member programs have increasingly called for resources to better meet the needs of women fleeing violence who have varying levels of mental wellness and/or substance use.

As a result, in 2011 BCSTH

completed the development of a 'Reducing Barriers' toolkit and training curriculum to develop the capacity of Transition Housing programs to support women fleeing violence with varying levels of mental wellness and substance use.

Since the initial piloting of training in 2011, we have facilitated 13 agency-specific trainings in recognition that each program is unique in terms of resources, geographic location, funding, values and history. Through the delivery of training we continue to learn about and, where possible, respond to the barriers that women seeking shelter and workers face in supporting them in communities across the province.



“We are a rural community offering low barrier service which has it's challenges as we work with complex issues such as mental health, addictions, FASD, developmental disabilities, complex trauma, PTSD, VAW, etc. We need more training for our staff i.e.: transition house worker training, working with women with disabilities, etc.” – Advocate in Transition House program

Of course, regardless of a woman’s level of mental wellness or substance use, women who have greater and more complex needs can require more time and resources from advocates. This can be challenging for programs that already feel stretched thin, especially programs that rely on volunteers or that are single-staffed for any period of time. Unfortunately, sometimes these constraints mean that women with greater needs have a more difficult time getting help from Transition Housing programs.

VALUING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ADVOCATES

“The wages we are funded to pay are woefully inadequate. As we lower barriers, staff are not only experts in safety planning and helping women set up new lives free of violence, they are advocates, substance relapse prevention counselors, and skilled in dealing with challenging mental health behaviours.” – Transition House Advocate

Because of the complexity of violence against women, advocates in Transition Housing and CWWA programs must acquire and apply various skill sets to effectively support women, youth and children who have experienced violence. One Transition House advocate said that it can take up to “...6 months to a year to feel comfortable as new staff as there are so many different scenarios and challenges.”

However, the wages in Violence Against Women programs do not always reflect the skill and knowledge required to effectively support women and children who have experienced violence, not to mention the danger that advocates are often putting themselves in just by going to work! Programs often see qualified staff leaving for positions that are less demanding and that can more adequately cover rising costs of living. This turnover in staff is costly, both in terms of hiring and training new advocates and in terms of ensuring that there are adequate staffing levels to support women, youth and children effectively.

“It is hard to maintain consistent support and community relationships when we go through so many staff. Our staff turnover costs us more money than it would to just provide our shelter with more funding for proper wages. This is after all a profession which in comparison to other health services is dramatically under paid.” – Transition House Advocate

Advocates are concerned that even when women, youth and children are able to access services, their needs are not always met. For example, one advocate pointed out that: "...women who wish to leave their abusive relationships often have to apply for income assistance and that sometimes gives them time to find out that they cannot live on what they are allotted from income assistance. [They] often [have] to use their food money for cost of hydro and extra rent because they don't get enough for a decent, safe place to live." – Safe Home Advocate

Childcare can also be a barrier for women wanting help after experiences of violence. Most Transition Housing and CWWA programs depend on volunteers to provide childcare while the mother attends various appointments that may be required. As a result, childcare is not always offered which can cause extra stress on families that are already in crisis. Transportation challenges can add additional stress. Women in rural and remote areas face additional transportation challenges, as they often need to travel outside of their communities to access services and supports.

CHILDCARE WAS THE MOST REQUESTED SERVICE THAT BOTH TRANSITION HOUSE AND SECOND STAGE PROGRAMS DO NOT PROVIDE. TRANSPORTATION OUT OF COMMUNITY WAS THE MOST REQUESTED FOR SAFE HOMES. CWWA PROGRAMS MOST OFTEN SEE REQUESTS FOR LONG-TERM SPECIALIZED COUNSELING THAT THEY CANNOT MEET.

"Poverty is a huge issue in this community and people would like to access services but have no reliable/safe childcare, no money, no transportation in the extremely cold weather, and usually walk here for programs." – CWWA Advocate

"If I did not come to this place today I believe I would be dead." – Woman in Transition House program

"It makes me happy knowing that from the time [women] come through the doors, they know they are not alone anymore. They never were." – Transition House Advocate

Despite the various constraints they work within, Transition Housing and CWWA advocates develop creative and resourceful ways to support the safety of women, youth and children who have experienced violence.

“The reason our program is both recommended and highly used, is that we are flexible both in hours of operation and accessibility of service. We meet clients at school, pick them up after school, and operate until 6pm to accommodate working caregivers.” – CWWA Advocate

Still, much work remains to be done. Together, we can ensure that every woman, youth and child who has experienced violence has access to the appropriate supports. Visit www.bcsth.ca or your local Transition Housing or CWWA program to find out how.

“What some women and children have lived through is not only humbling but downright inhumane. It is important that we, in the work we do to support their healing journey, are not doing it alone - we need support and solutions from a societal level.” – CWWA Advocate