

The Blueprint Project:

Short-term outcomes of a post-transition housing services model for women fleeing violence



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The Blueprint Pilot Project: Early Outcomes

About BC Society of Transition Houses

BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) is a non-profit association of Transition, Second Stage Housing Programs, Safe Home Programs, Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Programs, and other groups which serve the needs of women and their children fleeing violence. BCSTH also links schools with the CWWA program through the Violence Is Preventable (VIP) project.

Mission Statement

BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) is a centre of excellence enhancing the continuum of services and strategies necessary to end violence against women, youth and children.

BCSTH works from an Intersectional Feminist Framework incorporating a critical lens to the systems of power. Without ranking, we identify power as including our experience with and ability to access systems, our social or economic status, ability, Aboriginality, citizenship/nationality, class, education, ethnicity, experience of colonization, gender, geographic location, health, occupation, refugee/immigrant status, religion and sexuality. BCSTH acknowledges that this is not exhaustive.

Some of the work BCSTH does:

- Presents issues our members are facing to government and other influential stakeholders.
- Engages in ongoing public education and prevention activities.
- Facilitates and supports services and programs for women who experience violence.
- Develops and delivers training to front line workers.
- Coordinates, trains, and supports Children Who Witness Abuse programs (CWWA).
- Coordinates Violence is Preventable (VIP) programs in schools, which link CWWA programs and educational institutions, and provides support and education to young people through presentations, counselling, and group interventions.
- Monitors changes to laws about violence against women, youth and children, federally and provincially.
- Provides a library of resources to Members at no cost.
- Publishes Communiqué, a provincial newsletter for the Violence Against Women sector.
- Researches and writes position papers and creates Promising Practices, including Reducing Barriers to Support for Women Fleeing Violence.

Vision Statement

BC Society of Transition Houses envisions a world where every woman, youth, and child lives violence free.

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Acknowledgements on Behalf of the B.C. Society for Transition Houses

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Glossary of Acronyms

BCSTH:	British Columbia Society of Transition Houses
CCWS:	Community Coordination for Women's for Safety
CWWA:	Children Who Witness Abuse
EVA:	Ending Violence Association
MCFD:	Ministry for Children and Families
PWD:	Persons with Disabilities
STV:	Stopping the Violence
THP:	Transition Housing Program

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Executive Summary

Background

The Blueprint project involved the implementation of a Post-Transition Housing Services model in two B.C. Communities in 2012. This women-centred model focused on two processes: working with women and working with the community (see box to the right). The goals of the pilot project were to establish a Post-Transition Housing Model that:

- Recognizes the varied needs women may have as they move on from Transition Housing programs and assists women in meeting those needs (e.g., housing, building a sense of community, legal support, support for child care issues, and support around mental wellness or substance use).
- Recognizes that for many women these varied supports are overlapping and dependent on each other (e.g., a woman may need to access Income Assistance in order to obtain market housing).
- Builds on the positive relationships and supports women have as they move on from Transition Housing programs and counters the isolation that often comes with experiences of violence.
- Fosters community networks that strategize and act to make women's access to housing and supports after leaving a Transition Housing program easier.
- Is flexible enough to meet the needs of each community and individual woman.

The Blueprint project spanned from the fall of 2011 to March 2013. During the early phase of the project, a Post-Transition Housing Model was developed. Following input from the project advisory committee, the model entitled 'Blueprint' was implemented in two B.C. communities from June 1st to November 30th, 2012 by two trained workers. The Blueprint model was implemented in two different ways in this pilot. In Community A, there was not a distinct Blueprint worker role but rather the worker became another member of the

Working with Women: Worker Role

- Identify and prioritize needs as well as possible challenges to meeting needs.
- Identify current supports and assist women to build on these.
- Brainstorm possible resources/strategies to meet needs.
- Make appropriate referrals, advocate/support women to access programs and assist in navigating systems.
- Continue to support women in the community, re-evaluating needs, how they are being met, and identify areas for further support.

Working with the Community: Worker Role

- Develop partnerships that will benefit women moving on from Transition Housing programs.
- Consult with women and partners to identify current areas of strength that work for women.
- Consult with women and partners to identify and discuss barriers to housing and services.
- Strategize with women and partners about how to build on current strengths and reduce barriers to housing and services.
- Develop recommendations for change and individual action plans with community partners.

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agency's service provider team. In this model, women seeking service did not have one specific worker. Instead, they received support for a variety of issues from a worker who was available for appointments. In Community B, the Blueprint worker had a specific role that focused on helping women find housing. The position of a housing support worker for women fleeing violence was unique in this community.

Evaluation Methods

Feedback was gathered from three sources in order to inform the evaluation of the project. First women fleeing violence, who accessed services from the Blueprint worker, were invited to provide feedback through surveys and interviews. In total 48 women completed a pre-piloting survey, 27 women completed a post-piloting survey, and 19 women participated in an interview. Second, 51 representatives from community organizations completed an online survey in order to provide feedback about the existing supports and gaps for women fleeing violence and how the role of a specialised Post-Transition Housing worker could be of benefit to women. Third, the two Blueprint workers who implemented the model participated in three formal interviews and numerous ongoing conversations as to the successes and challenges in implementing the model. The following key findings are based on two sites and while instructive, future piloting on a broader scale would be required in order to assess whether these findings are applicable to other B.C. communities.

Key Findings

1. **Housing:** There is a critical shortage of affordable and adequate housing for women fleeing violence. For women who find permanent housing, they often end up in housing that requires them to give up other basic needs (e.g., adequate food, medical needs, clothing). Alternatively, for women who are not able to access affordable housing, they take temporary housing (e.g., seasonal motel rooms). Very few women are able to access public and subsidized housing.
2. **Income:** Most women in this project received government financial assistance. Many women required assistance to access income assistance. They reported significant challenges in paying for basic needs (i.e., shelter, food, transportation) on the monthly amount provided.
3. **Counselling:** Women had difficulties accessing counselling required to heal after fleeing a violent relationship. There are long waitlists and women report that when they do get to the top of the waitlist, they are not able to have regular appointments due to large caseloads. This shortage was also reported by service providers in both communities.
4. **Social support:** Women reported a need for social support. While the Bridging program served a need for some women in one of the two communities, there did not appear to be other opportunities for women fleeing violence to gather to receive support from other women.
5. **Emotional support:** Women reported that they wanted to know that there was someone to whom they could turn should they need support. For some women, a counsellor may be able to provide some of this support. For other women, they commented that they appreciated knowing a worker could be contacted in a time of need.
6. **Legal assistance:** Women required a great deal of support for legal issues after fleeing violence. While a minority of women are able to hire a lawyer, most rely on legal aid for some legal issues.

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For other issues, some women must hire a lawyer but if they do not have the means to do so, they have to walk away from the legal issue (e.g., division of assets).

7. **Systemic Barriers:** Several systemic barriers were identified by women that make it difficult for them to move on in their lives. These barriers primarily relate to interacting with programs (e.g., completing forms, waiting for replies etc.) related to income assistance, disability, legal matters, public housing and access to counselling-related programs.
8. **Inter-agency collaboration:** Both women and service providers identified a need for greater collaboration among agencies in order to better serve women fleeing violence. Service providers commented that agencies' resources are stretched very thin as they try to meet the demand and that burnout among workers is an issue.
9. **Women-centred approach:** There is a need for further education and ongoing reflection while doing work on the processes involved in working within a women-centred framework.

Recommendations

Working with Women

1. Examine the possibility of private counsellors and psychologists, who have experience in working with trauma, offering one or two free ongoing counselling 'spaces' to women fleeing violence in order that they can access regular support.
2. Increase funding to the Stopping the Violence program in order to allow more women to access counselling services.
3. Expand education and agency development around women-centred approaches.
4. Examine ways in which to increase social support groups and therapeutic groups for women fleeing violence.

Working with the Community

1. Develop and provide funding to implement a systematic approach to strengthen partnerships in and among sectors that support women fleeing violence.
2. Examine innovative approaches to accessing affordable housing for women fleeing violence that have been successful in other jurisdictions.
3. Continue efforts to help government agencies understand the systemic barriers which they have created within government programs that pose tremendous challenges for women when they attempt to flee violence.
4. Examine ways to increase access to food for women fleeing violence.

Advocacy-Related

1. Consider examining service capacity in some key areas of women's services in order to increase understanding among policy makers of the service shortages for women.
2. Continue to advocate for increased second stage housing in B.C. or some alternative to allow women time to transition from a violent relationship to a safer place.

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Conclusions

Based on the evaluation results of this short piloting period in two communities, the Blueprint model, when implemented as a focused and distinct service, shows greater promise as an effective method for supporting women as they transition to the community. Specifically, in one of the communities, the Blueprint worker focused on meeting the housing needs of women. These focused efforts embedded in a women-centred model yielded meaningful gains for service recipients.

Next Steps

Based on the findings of this pilot project, it is recommended that another pilot, that is longer in duration and includes more communities, be implemented in B.C. A broader implementation will provide more insights as to the varying needs of women fleeing violence across the province; existing resources to address these needs; as well as the most effective approach in meeting needs for which there is currently limited support. Results of a future pilot can build upon the results of this current pilot.

Given the tremendous need in the area of housing and counselling/emotional support that was clearly identified in this pilot, forming partnerships to provide these services to women could prove to be very effective. For example, one opportunity may be the formation of a partnership with the Woman Abuse Response Program which is currently piloting 16-week support groups for women fleeing violence. Such a partnership would increase access for women to counselling/emotional support. Having this service would then allow a Blueprint worker to focus more on housing support. The two specialized services, working in the same community, may prove to be highly beneficial to women fleeing violence. Further piloting using a women-centred approach, will shed light on the development of effective models that are responsive to the regional needs of women fleeing violence.

1. Introduction

For many British Columbian women fleeing violent relationships, their first safe haven is found in one of B.C.'s Transitional Housing Programs (THP). Located throughout B.C., these housing programs offer a wide variety of supports and services to women in need of assistance. These supports are critical for women leaving violent relationships yet in a survey conducted in 2008/09, over 6,000 women, many with children, were turned away due to lack of space.¹ Women who do enter one of B.C.'s 67 THP's are provided with shelter, food, emotional support, and practical assistance to help them navigate the health, justice and social systems.

Whether women enter a safe home or transition house is driven by what is located closest to them and where there is available space. Safe homes generally have a stay of no more than 10 days while transition houses have a stay that won't typically exceed 30 days. However, in some cases, this stay is extended, particularly in rural areas where there are no places to which women can transition in such a short period of time. Second Stage housing provides women with a stay of up to 18 months but unfortunately, there is a scarcity of this type of housing in B.C.

Violence against women is defined as "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

Estimated housing outcomes for women leaving THP shelters (2009)

- 13% went to another transition house;
- 9% went to a Second Stage house;
- 27% become homeless or stayed with friends/family;
- 30% returned to their previous address; and
- **37% found affordable housing.**

The scope of services and supports in THP vary a great deal throughout B.C. There are several factors (e.g., agency philosophies, staff training, staff capacity etc.) that lead to this variation but in large part services that are not available is due to the lack of a comprehensive program and funding model that would ensure greater consistency in funded services across the province. For example, in 2009, it was found that funding per bed for 10-bed houses ranged from \$33,265 to \$64,000 across B.C.² The degree to which beds are funded directly impacts the number and level of services that can be offered at THPs. When services and supports are not offered within THPs, a further factor adds to the unequal access to services – some communities simply have very few services (e.g., counselling, medical care, food banks). In larger centres or urban areas, there exist a wider range of services (e.g., legal support, support groups, medical services, employment training etc.). However, high demands for services results in long waitlists for women.

¹ BCSTH and BC Housing (2010) Review of Women's Housing and Support Programs.

² Ibid

1.1 Transitioning from a Safe Home or Transition House

Finding acceptable permanent housing after a stay in a safe home or transition house continues to be a tremendous challenge for women. While not all women seek permanent housing, among those who do, finding acceptable permanent, safe and affordable³ housing can prove to be an overwhelming experience. With high rental costs and limited availability in many areas, women often must settle for some form of temporary housing. In the comprehensive report entitled *Surviving Not Thriving: The Systematic Barriers to Housing for Women Leaving Violence*,⁴ four systematic barriers to securing acceptable permanent housing were explored. These four barriers included: poverty; unsafe and unacceptable housing (e.g., poorly maintained buildings, inadequate space for children); persistent patterns of re-victimization (e.g., gaps in policies and services that force women into homelessness or remaining in a violent relationship); and the health effects of violence (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress disorder).

What is 'acceptable' housing?

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 'acceptable housing' refers to housing that is "adequate in condition, suitable in size, and affordable."

For more information, visit www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca

With only 17 second stage housing programs in B.C., which collectively have 200 units offering stays of up to one year, capacity is very limited given the number of women in need of housing. In a sector-wide survey, it was estimated that only 37% of women find affordable housing after leaving a transitional housing program.⁵

While there are some rental subsidies for private market housing available to eligible women, most women fleeing violence do not meet the criteria for accessing these subsidies.⁶ For example:

- The Rental Assistance Program is open to working women (or receiving employment insurance) who have dependent children. This represents less than 25% of women who access THPs.
- The Homeless Outreach Program subsidies, designed to prevent homelessness, are limited in number.
- The Priority Placement Program moves women fleeing violence to the top of the housing registry for placement in B.C. Housing units in addition to a small number of non-profit managed units. Successful placements were at 34% in 2007.

³ Affordable housing is defined as housing costs that total 30% or less of before-tax household income. For rentals, this amount should include electricity, fuel, water, and any other municipal services (www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca)

⁴ Ponio, P and Jategaonkar, N. (2010). *Surviving Not Thriving: The Systematic Barriers for Women Leaving Violent Relationships*. Vancouver, BC: BC Non-Profit Housing Association.

⁵ BCSTH and BC Housing (2010) *Review of Women's Housing and Support Programs*.

⁶ The 2010 Review also found that most workers do not know about the rental subsidies. This is not surprising given that securing housing is not the focus of their role nor do they have adequate time given all the other areas in which they support women.

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The critical shortage of housing is not a new finding nor is it isolated to one region. In a sector wide survey,⁷ housing was identified as the number one need for women. Housing was also a top need identified by women in the BCSTH's 2011 Reducing Barriers project.⁸ Further to this, funding of workers who have a focused role in supporting women to find housing is currently non-existent. While workers try to assist if time permits, they do not have dedicated time or funding to provide this type of support.



The first step to some stability in a women's life is housing but housing is not the only support that women need as they transition from a violent relationship to a safer place. Women fleeing violence need access to other services in order to feel supported as they make a major life change for themselves and often children. In the 2011 Reducing Barriers project pre-piloting survey, only 65% of the 97 women who were moving on from a THP felt strongly that they were ready to leave the program. At the post-piloting survey which occurred after the implementation of a low barrier access model to services, this increased to 73% of women.⁹ The biggest need that continues to be unmet for many women is mental health and wellness support as well as ongoing emotional support. This includes specialized counselling services such as access to an outreach worker, trauma therapy, substance use counselling, child and youth counselling, and women's supports groups.¹⁰ The key barriers for women to accessing these services are long waitlists, services that are time-limited and therefore not intense enough to address issues, and non-existent services in some areas of need depending on the community (e.g., services that address mental health and addictions). While there are private services that can be accessed through psychologists and counsellors, the costs of the sessions is prohibitive for women.

⁷ BCSTH and BC Housing (2010) Review of Women's Housing and Support Programs.

⁸ Arbor Educational & Clinical Consulting Inc. (2011). Reducing Barriers to Services and Supports for Substance Use and Mental Wellness Concerns Among Women Fleeing Violence: Key Findings. Prepared for BC Society of Transition Houses. <http://www.bcsth.ca/content/reducing-barriers-support-women-who-experience-violence>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Arbor Educational & Clinical Consulting Inc. (2011). Reducing Barriers to Services and Supports for Substance Use and Mental Wellness Concerns Among Women Fleeing Violence: Key Findings. Prepared for BC Society of Transition Houses. <http://www.bcsth.ca/content/reducing-barriers-support-women-who-experience-violence>

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1.2 From In-House Services to Outreach Services

Outreach workers are part of a continuum of services that some women have access to as they leave a THP. Where the THP staff provide supports and services during a woman's stay, the outreach worker continues in this role in order to help women make a successful transition by offering them information, support, and referrals to community agencies when appropriate. In addition to women identifying the need for access to outreach workers, this need has also been identified as a top priority for staff in THPs in B.C.¹¹ At the national level, one recent study made recommendations for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to adequately fund "post-shelter" services for women.¹²

The Cost of Domestic Violence in Canada

According Justice Canada, spousal violence cost \$7.4 billion in 2009.

This financial impact was a result from costs of policing, healthcare, lost wages, and even funerals.

Advocacy efforts in the early 1990s led to the creation of "outreach" positions. In B.C., various types of outreach positions exist with different mandates funded by different branches of government (e.g., outreach to reduce homelessness). Currently there are less than 20 THPs in the province that have outreach workers who provide "post-shelter" services. This limited number of positions means that not all women can access these services. Further to this, in communities in which there are outreach workers, caseloads are large and often cover vast geographical areas making it difficult to meet the varying needs (e.g., housing support, child protection, emotional support, family law, poverty law, and systemic advocacy) that women have as they transition from THPs.

It is the need for this outreach support at a critical juncture in a woman's life that led to the development of the Blueprint project. In order to examine the efficacy of a 'post-transition housing services' delivery model, the BCSTH and its members decided to apply for funding for the Blueprint Project. Funding was granted for the period of 2011-2013.

¹¹ Queenswood Consulting. (2010). Review of Women's Transition Housing and Supports Programs. Conducted for BC Housing and BC Society of Transition Houses. <http://www.bchousing.org/Partners/Operating#WTHSP>

¹² Tutty, L. (2006). Effective Practices in Sheltering Women Leaving Violence in Intimate Relationships. Toronto, ON: YWCA Canada. <http://ywcacanada.ca/en/publications>

2. The Blueprint Project: An Overview

“Post-Transition Housing Services involve a planned, supported process of working with women, their children and other community services to support women as they move on from a Transition Housing program and into a housing setting in the community.”¹³

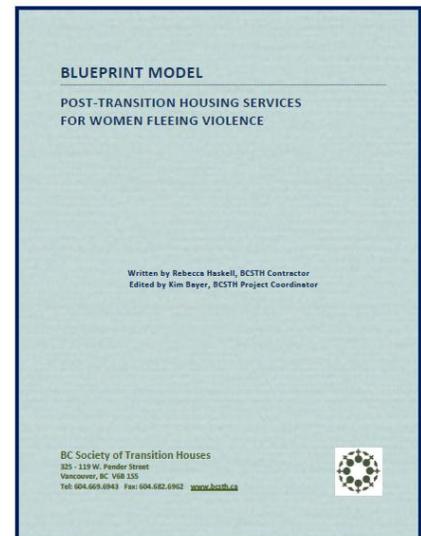
In April 2011, the Blueprint Project began with the development of the project plan. This process took place over five months. Through the course of the plan development, a shift from implementing the project in four sites (with part-time workers) to two sites (with full-time workers) was seen as necessary based on feedback from individuals in the THP sector. Having part-time workers posed challenges to adequately implement an effective post-transitional housing support model.¹⁴ In September 2011, the final project plan was approved by Status of Women Canada. In September and October 2011, an advisory committee, led by a project coordinator, was formed and work then began on creating the Blueprint model for the project.

The overall goal of the Blueprint model is to connect women with housing and other community supports by inviting women to engage with a designated post-transition house worker. In developing the Blueprint model, the BCSTH drew upon the work from the Homeless Link, a non-profit agency in London, England. In particular, two documents proved to be very helpful in the process: *Resettlement Handbook*¹⁵ and the *Moving on Plans Protocol (MOPP)*.¹⁶

2.1 The Blueprint Model Highlights

The Blueprint Model¹⁷ is a ‘process’ for delivering ‘post-transition house’ services to women. In providing services, workers are asked to always consider several dimensions as they work with women and community agencies. Key dimensions for consideration underlying the work are as follows:

- **Scope of services** (i.e., who will be supported; when will support begin and end; how can there be continuity of service).



¹³ Haskell & Bayer (2012). Blueprint Model: Post Transition Housing Services for Women Fleeing Violence.

¹⁴ This change from four to two sites required revisions to be completed and approved by Status of Women. The changes resulted in a two month delay to the start of the project.

¹⁵ Housing Link. (2009). The Resettlement Handbook. London, UK: Housing Link. <http://handbooks.homeless.org.uk/resettlement>

¹⁶ Housing Link. (2007). The Move-on Plans Protocol. London, UK: Housing Link. <http://www.homeless.org.uk/mopp>

¹⁷ For an expanded elaboration on the Blueprint model and its elements, see: Haskell & Bayer (2012). Blueprint Model: Post Transition Housing Services for Women Fleeing Violence.

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- **Record keeping** (i.e., time-limited and written consent procedures, determining what and how information will be recorded, how will information be used and stored, and how will information be shared with other agencies).
- **Intake process procedures** (i.e., asking for only basic information in order to set goals and actions and ensure the safety of the woman and children).
- **Confidentiality** (i.e., the woman is always asked for written consent to share information with outside agencies and the rationale for sharing information is explained).
- **Safety issues and professional boundaries** (i.e., having organizational policies in place to ensure the health and safety of the program for both workers and women accessing services).
- **Cultural contexts** (i.e., being aware of a woman's culture and how this influences perceptions and decisions; being reflective, as the worker, on the way you honor a woman's culture through the delivery of services).

2.2 The Role of the Post-Transition House Worker

There are two primary areas of foci for the post-transition house worker.

1. **Working with Women:** Provision of direct, frontline support and advocacy for women who are moving on from a THP.
2. **Working with the Community:** Strengthening partnerships with community agencies and individuals locally, regionally and provincially in order to reduce barriers and increase access to housing and other support services for women.

2.3 Working with Women: Worker Role and Process

In working with women, the worker has several tasks in order to facilitate the process of moving on from a THP to the community.

Working with Women: Worker Role

- Identify and prioritize needs as well as possible challenges to meeting needs.
- Identify current supports and assist women to build on these.
- Brainstorm possible resources/strategies to meet needs.
- Make appropriate referrals, advocate/support women to access programs and assist in navigating systems.
- Continue to support women in the community, re-evaluating needs, how they are being met, and identify areas for further support.

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In supporting women through the post-transition house process, five steps are provided for workers in order to help guide the process. While these steps can be used sequentially, they are also fluid in that women may need supports at the different points throughout their work with the worker.

Five Steps in Working with Women

Step 1 Identify and prioritize needs and challenges	Meet women where they are at. Work in women-centered ways. Be open to the wide range of needs and priorities identified by women.
Step 2 Build on current supports	In the past, has she accessed supports around her needs? What has she found helpful? What was not helpful? How can the connections she has now help to meet her needs?
Step 3 Brainstorm	Is she interested in accessing services or supports, particularly any she has accessed in the past? Others? How can you support her? Is she open to suggestions? How might she meet her needs on her own/with your help/with the help of others? How can you support her in this process? Is she open to suggestions?
Step 4 Refer, advocate, support	Safety: Is the referral agency violence-informed? Does it utilize strategies to avoid re-traumatization? Women's concerns: What are they? Can they be addressed? If so, how? Support: What does she need to access referral? Follow-Up: Did she go? How was the experience? Equitable support: Spend more time with the women who need it most.
Step 5 Continue to support women in the community	Is the need/area of focus still relevant? How is the situation progressing? Is she satisfied with the progress? What changes would she like to see? What else does she need to meet her needs? What support does she need?

2.4 Working with the Community: Worker Role and Process

Establishing strong partnerships with community agencies and individuals in order to enhance overall access to services and supports is an area of great need. Women who are fleeing violence are best served when they get timely access to services such as counselling, housing, legal advocacy, and other services. Building relationships with community partners takes time and part of the role of the outreach worker is to begin to foster these partnerships in order to strengthen the web of support for women.

Working with the Community: Worker Role

- Develop partnerships that will benefit women moving on from Transition Housing programs.
- Consult with women and partners to identify current areas of strength that work for women.
- Consult with women and partners to identify and discuss barriers to housing and services.
- Strategize with women and partners about how to build on strengths and reduce barriers to housing and services.
- Develop recommendations for change and individual action plans with community partners.

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Five Steps to Building Partnerships with Community Organizations and Individuals

Step 1 Develop Partnerships	Who will you work with? What will your partnership structure look like? What are the benefits of the partnership?
Step 2 Identify strengths and challenges	Consult with women, Transition Housing staff and partners through informal and formal means.
Step 3 Strategies	Brainstorm what changes might be made to build on current strengths with women, Transition Housing staff, and partners.
Step 4 Develop recommendations and action plans	Identify common themes from consultations and brainstorming. Develop recommendations for the short- and long-term, including considerations for future Post-Transition Housing programs. Develop action plans with partners that include specific and measurable goals, clear steps to achieve them, and timeframes.
Step 5 Continue to meet, assess, and adapt	Meet regularly to stay current. Be realistic, open, and honest with partners. Adapt and make changes when needed.

2.5 Blueprint Project Goals

The goals of this pilot project are to establish a Post-Transition Housing Model that:

- Recognizes the varied needs women may have as they move on from Transition Housing programs and assists women in meeting those needs (e.g., housing, building a sense of community, legal support, support for child care issues, and support around mental wellness or substance use).
- Recognizes that for many women these varied supports are overlapping and dependent on each other (e.g., a woman may need to access Income Assistance in order to obtain market housing).
- Builds on the positive relationships and supports women have as they move on from Transition Housing programs and counters the isolation that often comes with experiences of violence.
- Fosters community networks that strategize and act to make women's access to housing and supports after leaving a Transition Housing program easier.
- Is flexible enough to meet the needs of each community and individual woman.

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3. Evaluation Methods

While funding was provided from the April of 2011 to March 2013, the implementation of the post-transition house services model ('The Blueprint Model') was six months in length, beginning on June 1st, 2012 and ending on November 30th, 2012. In evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of the Blueprint model, the focus was on the two key components of the model: working with women and working with the community. Several stakeholders in two communities were involved in order to gather diverse perspectives.

3.1 Participants in the Evaluation

	Stakeholder Group	Participants	Timing of Evaluation
Community A	Women	30 women completed a pre-piloting survey 17 women completed a post-piloting survey 13 women participated in a post-piloting interview	June to October 2012 August to December 2012 December 2012
	Community agency representatives	30 representatives from various community agencies completed an online survey examining community strengths and gaps for women fleeing violence.	June to November 2012
	Site Blueprint worker	Three formal interviews as well as ongoing conversations with the Blueprint worker	May to December 2012
	Pilot site executive director	Emails and informal conversations as needed	May 2012 to March 2013
Community B	Stakeholder Group	Participants	Timing of Evaluation
	Women	18 women completed a pre-piloting survey 10 women completed a post-piloting survey 6 women participated in a post-piloting interview	June to October 2012 August to December 2012 December 2012
	Community agency representatives	21 representatives from various community agencies completed an online survey examining community strengths and gaps for women fleeing violence.	June to November 2012
	Site Blueprint worker	Three formal interviews as well as ongoing conversations with the Blueprint worker	May to December 2012
	Pilot site executive director	Emails and informal conversations as needed	May 2012 to March 2013

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3.2 Evaluation Instruments

Pre-piloting survey for women: Prior to receiving service from the Blueprint worker, women were invited to complete a pre-piloting survey. This survey consisted of Likert-type rating scale and open-ended questions. Questions were designed to gather information about past supports and services, current service and support needs, and hoped-for expectations from connecting with the Blueprint worker. Women were also asked to indicate whether they would consider participating in an interview at the end of the project.

Post-piloting survey from women: At the end of the project, women were invited to provide their perspectives on the project. As in the pre-piloting survey, questions were Likert-type and open-ended. Questions focused on women's experience in setting and reaching their goals through their work with the Blueprint worker, their overall experience in working with the Blueprint worker, women's support group experience, housing, financial issues, and overall support and services in the community.

Interviews with women: In order to ensure a wide range of perspectives and a deeper understanding of the impact of the Blueprint model, women from each of the two communities were invited to participate in a phone interview. Interviews explored their current living situation, goals that were reached with the assistance of the Blueprint worker, outstanding needs, experiences with cross-agency communication, and overall ways that women can best be supported as they move on from a THP or prior living situation in which there was violence.

Community agency survey: To better understand strengths and challenges with respect to supports and services for women fleeing violence within each community, representatives from agencies were invited to complete an online survey. Questions asked individuals to provide feedback on available services for women and community needs. Further to this, individuals were asked whether they thought that having a dedicated worker to help women transition back to the community after leaving a violent relationship could be helpful.

Interviews and conversations with Blueprint Workers: Throughout the course of the project, three formal interviews were conducted with the two Blueprint workers. These interviews and conversations explored successes, challenges, learnings, and new developments throughout the course of the project.

Data tracking: In order to better understand the specific needs of women and time required to address these needs, extensive data tracking was conducted throughout the project. Data tracking variables included hours spent on various aspects of supporting women such as housing, income assistance, legal issues, MCFD issues, medical, transportation, referrals to other supports etc. Partnership building efforts were also documented throughout the course of the pilot.

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3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected throughout the project through the following process.

Community A Surveys for Women: The Blueprint worker worked as a member of an agency team. As most of the women in Community A had been longer-term service recipients of the agency, the Blueprint worker invited all women to give their feedback via a paper-based survey at the beginning of the pilot and again at the end of the pilot. A small number of women were new service recipients during the piloting period. Women were given the survey with an ID number. Only the Blueprint worker knew the identity of the woman. Women were provided an addressed envelope with postage in order to mail back the survey. As a thank-you for taking their time, women received a \$20 gift card.

Community B Surveys for Women: The Blueprint worker was connected to an agency but her housing focus was a distinct role. All women in Community B were new service recipients. As women began their work with the Blueprint worker, they were invited to give their feedback via a paper-based survey. Women were also invited to give their feedback at the conclusion of service or at the end of the pilot – whichever came first. As with the surveys in Community A, the process was the same for assigning women an ID number so that only the Blueprint worker was aware of their identity. Women were provided an addressed envelope with postage in order to mail back the survey. As a thank-you for taking their time, women received a \$20 gift card.

Interviews with Women: Women were asked on the pre-piloting survey if they would be willing to consider participating in an interview at the end of the Blueprint project. In addition, women who had not completed a survey were also invited by the Blueprint worker to consider participating in an interview. The overall selection process focused on including women with diverse backgrounds. Interviews were arranged through the Blueprint worker. The evaluator was provided with the ID number of the woman only. All interviews were via phone. Women had the option of having the evaluator call her at home or at the local agency.

Community Agency Survey: The online community agency survey was open from July 2012 until November 2012. In Community A, the evaluator distributed the link via email and phone to key agencies and encouraged them to forward the link to other agencies. In Community B, the Blueprint worker distributed the link to representatives of community agencies.

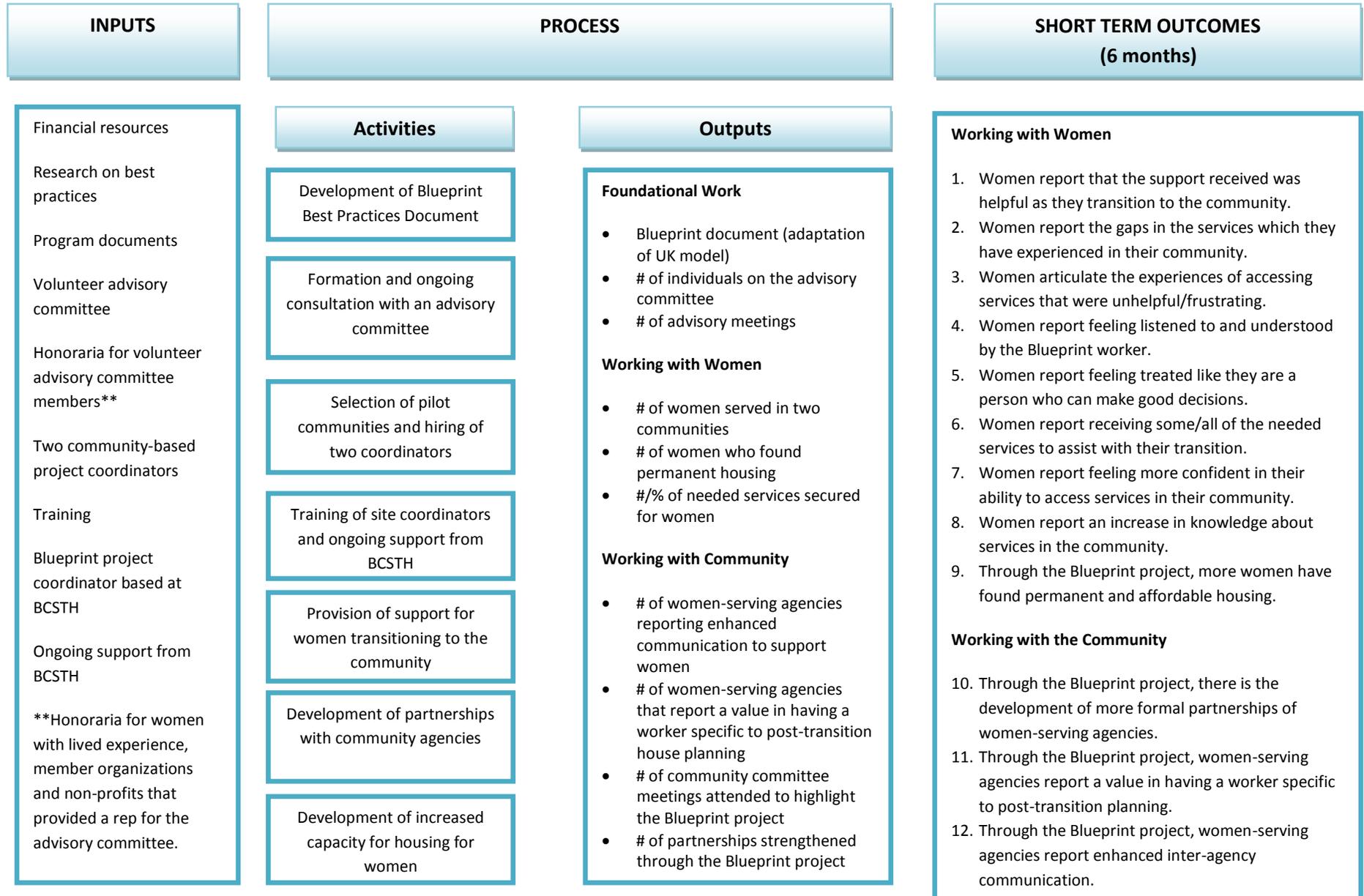
Interviews and conversations with Blueprint Workers: With the exception of one face-to-face meeting with the Blueprint workers, all interviews and conversations took place via phone throughout the pilot and after the pilot ended. There were three formal interviews and numerous ongoing conversations.

Data Tracking: Blueprint workers did extensive data tracking in Excel and this was submitted to the evaluator each month.

Data analysis: Data was analysed using quantitative and qualitative procedures. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics while qualitative analysis included content analysis methods.

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4. The Blueprint Project Evaluation Logic Model



5. An Overview of the Two Pilot Sites

5.1 Community A Profile

Community A Profile (Census 2011)	
Population	5,306
% of the population identifying as female	53.3%
Median age of population	55.2
% of population aged 15 and over	87.9%
Number (%) of people who identify English as their mother tongue	4,535 (85.5%)
Number (%) of people who identify French as their mother tongue	115 (2.2%)
Number of people who identify a non-official language as their mother tongue (German, Russian, Ukrainian, Dutch, Hungarian) ¹⁸	470 (8.6%)
Number (%) of residents who indicate speaking English in the home	5,115 (96.4%)
Number (%) of residents 40-64	1,845 (34.8%)
Number (%) of residents 65-85+	1,755 (33.1%)

Employment: Community A is involved in tourism and agriculture; however, it is primarily a retirement community. Employment opportunities are limited.

Safe Home/Transition Houses: In Community A, an agency owns and manages a safe home program. There is a bachelor suite, one bedroom and two bedroom apartment. These accommodations serve as shelter beds but can also be used for longer term stays under an accommodation agreement.¹⁹ Funding is provided for an up to 14-night stay in the safe home. Whether an apartment is used as a safe home or under an accommodation agreement depends on the needs of women at any given point in time.

Services for Women: Community A has limited services for women. There are two agencies that provide distinct services for women. One agency provides outreach services such as advocacy, shelter, referral and support for women fleeing violence while another community agency provides counselling services to women and children. However, there are long waitlists for counselling. In addition, there is one drug and alcohol counsellor for women needing this service. When women need more specialised services,

¹⁸ These languages are the top five non-official languages. Together they account for 67% of the non-official languages spoken.

¹⁹ In order for women to live in one of the suites for a longer term, they must sign an accommodation agreement which outlines the rules and regulations for a longer term stay in one of the suites. Under the agreement, a fee is charged to the woman – generally \$375 a month (shelter portion if on income assistance) or 30% of a woman's income.

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they must travel to a larger centre. There is a 'health bus' that does serve the community by transporting individuals twice a week to the larger centre, approximately 1.5 hours away.

As there is no local office for women to apply for income assistance, this must be done via telephone. There is a MCFD office open during business hours. The local detachment of the RCMP is fully staffed during business hours and has minimal staff on duty evenings and weekends. There is no legal or poverty advocate in the community. In terms of legal advocacy, one of the two agencies fills this role as workers have received training in the process of taking affidavits. This community is also part of a circuit court and as a result, women sometimes need to go to the larger centre in order to address legal matters.

5.2 Community A Blueprint Pilot Agency Partner

The Blueprint Pilot Agency Partner serves Community A and the surrounding rural area. They offer three key areas of service with regards to women fleeing violence:

1. One program offers shelter for women,²⁰ advocacy, and referral. Funding for the operation of the safe home program is provided through B.C. Housing. In addition to services provided during business hours, the program operates a 24-hour crisis line staffed by support workers. Staff provide information for women who are living in violent relationships or who are thinking about leaving a violent relationship. Staff will also accompany women to various appointments (e.g., legal, medical, government ministry offices etc.) in a supportive or advocacy role.
2. Elder Safe Home: The agency operates a Safe Home for senior women. They also have volunteers who provide services as senior advocates.
3. Public Education on Abuse (e.g., attending network meetings, workshops etc.)



²⁰ The shelter's mandate is to provide shelter to women and their children.

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The agency has two full-time workers, one support staff person and the executive director. While the two support workers work with the women, the executive director also does some frontline work. As a result of the Blueprint Pilot, a third worker was added to the agency.

During the Blueprint pilot (June to November 2012), an average of 19 new or ongoing service recipients and their children²¹ were served through the shelter program and Older Women's Programs each month. An average of 34 women and their children were served through the outreach program per month during this same time period (an average of 25 women each month were ongoing service recipients who received outreach services).²² There were 123 nights during this period in which a shelter bed was utilized.

5.3 Community B Profile

Community B Community Profile (Census 2011)	
Population	32, 880
% of the population identifying as female	53%
Median age of population	49.4
% of population aged 15 and over	87.6%
Number (%) of people who identify English as their mother tongue	27,805 (85.9%)
Number (%) of people who identify French as their mother tongue	570 (1.8%)
Number of people who identify a non-official language as their mother tongue (German, Punjabi, Portuguese, Ukrainian) ²³	3,620 (11.2%)
Number (%) of residents who indicate speaking English in the home	30,485 (94.2%)
Number (%) of residents 40-64	11,800 (35.8%)
Number (%) of residents 65-85+	8,500 (25.9%)

Employment: Community B is also involved in tourism and agriculture. In Community B, there are some opportunities in the retail and healthcare sectors. Overall, unless one has specialized post-secondary education and training, jobs are lower paying.

Safe Home/Transition Houses: In Community B, there is a 14-bed transitional housing program with a stay of up to 30 days as well as three safe homes for older women. These are all managed by a local

²¹ This is the average number of women. The majority of service recipients were ongoing.

²² The number of ongoing service recipients in the Blueprint piloting is substantially higher than the number of ongoing service recipients in the first half of year. This may be in part due to the Blueprint worker contacting service recipients in order to gather their feedback for this project and with the addition of another full-time staff person, agency capacity was increased.

²³ These languages are the top four non-official languages. Together they account for 58.5% of the non-official languages spoken.

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women-serving organization. There is also a transition/emergency house on First Nations Land for members of the local Nation.

Services for Women: Community B has a large women-serving organization that, in addition to managing a THPs, offers women and children counselling, support, advocacy, referral, outreach, family support programs (e.g., parenting skills), senior women's programs, and assistance with clothing, food and household items, and a Bridging program.²⁴ In addition to this organization, there is a Women's Centre which offers assistance with legal issues, tenancy issues, and government income and subsidy issues. A third agency which is attended by numerous women fleeing violence is a community-based victim services society. Numerous other agencies exist that serve a wide range of individuals who have varying needs (e.g., Salvation Army, immigrant services, community resource society etc.).



While there appear to be numerous resources, particularly compared to Community A, staffing and resources are not adequate to meet the demand of residents in the Community B and surrounding area. As a result caseloads are extremely large and waitlists are long for service, particularly for more intense services such as counselling. For example, there is only one part-time worker who runs the mature women's program that serves the Community B and surrounding area. Given that 25% of Community B's population is over 65 (not factoring in all the surrounding communities), this is a huge undertaking for one part-time worker. Other areas of challenge are the lack of family physicians in the area and some rules being implemented by walk-in clinics around the maximum number of visits one can have to any one clinic.

5.4 Community B Blueprint Pilot Agency Partner

The Blueprint Pilot Agency Partner serves Community B as well as the surrounding area. They run eight programs and services for women and children fleeing violence.

1. Transition House with 14 beds for women and children fleeing violence. The Transition House is staffed 24 hours per day.
2. The Outreach program supports women fleeing violence but who do not require a stay in the Transition House.
3. The Children's program provides counselling for children.
4. The Family Support program supports women and children through parenting skills, community information and support.

²⁴ The Bridging program is aimed to assist women 18-64 in order that they can move through the stages of recognizing, understanding, and overcoming the effects of abuse.

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5. The Children Who Witness Abuse Programs (CWWA) offer group counselling for children in order to develop safety plans and skills.
6. The Silent and Invisible program supports women over 50 with special services.
7. A second hand store which offers service recipients free clothing and household goods. The store also sells to the public and the proceeds go toward funding other programs.
8. The Bridging program which is a ten-week program that runs three days a week. The program is for women ages 18-64 to help them recognize, understand, and overcome the effects of abuse. Included in the Bridging program are life skills, pre-training, and pre-employment topics.

During the Blueprint pilot (June to November 2012), the agency supported:

- 366 women and 69 children in their Transition House and outreach programs;
- 47 women in the Mature Women and safe homes;
- 84 women in the Community Outreach programs; and
- 31 children in the children's programs.



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6. Blueprint Implementation

The Blueprint project received funding in the summer of 2011. Shortly after this time, work began on the development of a model that would be tested in two B.C. communities. The several activities that took place in the Blueprint project are outlined below.

6.1 Timeline for project activities

Timeline for Blueprint Project Activities 2011-2013		
	Timing of Activities	Blueprint Project Activities
Spring 2011	April 2011-June 2011	Development of project and evaluation plans
Summer 2011	August 2011	Recruitment and training of the Blueprint Project coordinator
	August 2011	Final approval of the project plan
Fall 2011	October 2011-February 2012	Development of the Blueprint Model
	December 2011	First meeting of the Blueprint Advisory group
Spring 2012	March 2012	Pilot site selection
	April 2012	Hiring of Blueprint workers in two sites
	April 2012	Blueprint worker training in Vancouver
	May 2012	Pre-piloting interviews with the two Blueprint workers
PILOTING PERIOD June 2012- November 2012	June 2012-November 2012	Services and supports to women through the Blueprint worker
	June 2012-November 2012	Pre-piloting surveys with women accessing services
	June 2012-November 2012	Community agency surveys
	July 2012	First online survey for the Blueprint advisory group
	August 2012	Project mid-point interview with the two Blueprint workers
	August 2012-November 2012	Post-pilot surveys with women accessing services
	November 2012	Final online survey for the Blueprint advisory group
November 2012 – December 2012	December 2012	Selected interviews with women who have accessed services
	December 2012	Final interviews with the two Blueprint workers
January – May 2013	January to February 2013	Wrap up of the project in the communities Completion of data collection for evaluation
	March 2013	Completion of the final report
	May 2013	Final Blueprint advisory group meeting

6.2 Advisory group

In order to guide the project, an advisory committee was formed in the fall of 2011. There were a total of thirteen people on the advisory committee representing women with lived experience, the public and private housing sectors, frontline THP staff, and health.²⁵ The advisory committee began its' work with reviewing the Blueprint model which was developed for the project. During the period of development (fall 2011 to early spring 2012), drafts of the model were reviewed and revised with input from the advisory committee. Once the Blueprint document was completed, the role of the advisory committee shifted toward the work being done in the two sites. Site coordinators provided updates to the advisory committee through regularly scheduled teleconferences. Advisory committee members were invited to provide comments, insights, and suggestions as needs arose. The last meeting of the advisory committee was held in May 2013 in which evaluation results were shared and next steps were explored among the group. In total there were ten meetings held over the course of one and a half years.

6.3 Preparation for the Blueprint Piloting

In each of the two sites, a full-time worker was hired for the project and supervised by staff at the BCSTH. After receiving two days of training in order to understand the project framework and goals, which were embedded in a woman-centred approach,²⁶ the workers returned to their communities to begin the process of Blueprint implementation.²⁷ Workers had approximately five weeks to prepare for the beginning of the Blueprint piloting prior to working with women. They were encouraged to examine ways in which they could become familiar with the supports and services in the community so that partnership building could begin with the end goal of facilitating easier access to services for women. In addition, there were several administrative aspects to the project such as data tracking and monthly reporting with which the workers needed to familiarize themselves. As the workers were employees of the BCSTH, all records were the property of this organization.

"A women-centred approach includes working with women to build on existing strengths, recognizing that women use many strategies to keep themselves and their children safe. It also means respecting a women's choice, providing services and options for women with a goal of safety rather than punishment or further control, ensuring that services are respectful of cultural diversity and recognizing that all forms of marginalization affect women's experiences and may limit options."

(Buchwitz, 2001)

²⁵ Twelve members represent the number of individuals on the advisory committee in the fall 2012.

²⁶ Buchwitz, R. (2001). Alternatives to Apprehension: Education, Action and Advocacy. Society to Support Family Bonding and Healing and DAMS.

²⁷ In the case of one site, both the worker and the Executive Director attended the training.

6.4 The Blueprint Piloting in Community A

In Community A, the Blueprint worker had previously worked for the woman-serving agency conducting an elder women's group and providing crisis line support. Prior to Blueprint, there were two main workers who supported women fleeing violence. At the agency, women are not assigned one worker but rather work with the worker who is available, although women can request appointments with a specific worker and these requests can sometimes be met. The Blueprint worker became the third worker in the agency. As she did not have a specific caseload of women with whom she worked, all women receiving service from any of the three workers (the two permanent workers and the Blueprint worker) were included in the pilot. As a result, the Blueprint worker spent a significant amount of time managing the pilot and doing administrative work as she reviewed files of ongoing service recipients from two workers in addition to working with new service recipients.

Intake: Women, who at some point in their lives have suffered abuse, are eligible for service at this agency. The intake process was tailored for each woman as needed. Forms were tailored in order that they met the agency and Blueprint piloting criteria. Women met with a worker and shared their story. Generally, this usually happened over two or more meetings. At the first meeting, key information was gathered such as contact information, children involved, partner's name, name of doctor, etc. Any immediate needs were discussed. If there was a safe home request, extensive information was gathered due to safety issues. As women told their stories, options are outlined by the worker as to what has worked best for women in the past. Together the worker and the woman identified next steps in order to meet their goals. What the Blueprint worker found was that some women wanted someone else to make the decisions, others wanted a joint decision-making process, and some chose to do things differently than the worker suggested. Detailed notes were recorded in the file in order to allow any one of the three workers to continue the work with the woman.

As the Blueprint worker was part of a team, women in the pilot did not necessarily work primarily with the designated Blueprint worker. As the agency does not have time limits on service, some women had been supported by the agency for a lengthy period of time. The women included in the Blueprint project were more likely to be long-term service recipients of the agency. After the conclusion of the Blueprint project, most of the women remained service recipients of the agency.

Record Keeping: Overall, there was a substantial amount of records kept for each woman. These included: data sheets, detailed handwritten notes of a woman's life experiences, services received, telephone calls, drop-in visits; copies of all documents (e.g., government forms) for which women received assistance completing; confidentiality statements; and service plans.²⁸

Referral Process: While the agency provided many services to women, they did not provide formal counselling. For this support, women were referred to another agency which housed the Stopping the Violence counselling and the CWWA program. The agency may refer women to a Transitional Housing

²⁸ The model at the agency is that a woman does not work exclusively with one worker. Files are detailed and in this way, a woman may see another worker. The worker then reads detailed notes in a file. There are also regular case conference meetings.

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program in a larger centre given that there is not this service in the community. For First Nations, Metis, and Inuit women, referrals are sometimes made to the local First Nations Child & Family Services.

Empowering women: The Blueprint worker's goal was to empower women through providing support. Through receiving this support, it was hoped that women would feel more empowered to make their own decisions, take on tasks for which she had previously received support (e.g., communicating with income assistance) and feel that is okay to make mistakes.

Areas of support for women: Given that the community is small and there is only one other agency that provides counselling-specific services for women, the agency took on many roles with women, such as housing, legal advocacy, emotional support, and assistance with government paperwork and filings.

6.5 The Blueprint Piloting in Community B

In Community B, the role of the Blueprint worker as a housing advocate was a new and distinct role. A linked support that she provided was assisting women to get income assistance and other financial support in order they could access some form of housing. The Blueprint worker did refer women to other services in the community as needs arose. Women came to the Blueprint worker through referrals from the local transition house or local community agencies that worked with women fleeing violence. All women service recipients were new to the Blueprint worker and were able to access service from the period of June 1st to November 30th. After the conclusion of Blueprint, there was no longer a distinct worker who focused on addressing housing needs. Women who remained in the Community B area²⁹ could access other support services (not housing specific) although waitlists were common for women who were new to the systems.

Intake: The Blueprint worker met with each woman and conducted the intake process (e.g., completion of confidentiality forms) as well as consulting with women as to their needs. The worker focused on listening to women for them to voice what they needed and always checked back to see if there were other needs that emerged. Forms were tailored to meet the needs of the project and in the case of the Community B site, forms focused heavily on housing needs. One of the challenges was completing

²⁹ Some women who initially met with the Blueprint worker left the Community B area due to safety issues, to move closer to other sources of support, or to return to another province in which access to medical services and income assistance were already established. The reasons for some women leaving the area are unknown.

The Journey of Women: Differences in Community A and B

Compared to Community A, women in Community B were much earlier on in their journey of moving on from a transitional housing program. Women in Community A had received supports and service from the agency from a few months to several years. These differences are reflected in the degree to which women told their stories on the surveys (and through the interviews). There was more of a theme of reflecting back in the surveys and interviews from Community A whereas in Community B, women's voices were in the here and now as they strived to meet basic needs.

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paperwork in the first meeting as women were often stressed about finding housing. Completing the forms sometimes occurred in the second or third meeting in order to allow the Blueprint worker the time and space to really listen to the needs and concerns of the women.³⁰ Another challenge that was evident was that women had so little in the area of the financial resources needed to secure housing (e.g., rent costs, damage deposit, utilities etc.) and so the process seemed overwhelming.

Recording Keeping: Record keeping was kept to a minimum and focused on only documenting information specific to the support that a woman needed (e.g., phone numbers in the cases where women had a phone, age of woman in the event that she may qualify for senior's housing, number of children to determine size of space needed). While the worker came to know the women through the process of supporting them and some of this information provided helpful background information and a deeper understanding of the women's needs, this was not documented in order to increase the level of confidentiality for the women.

Referral Process: Given that the Blueprint worker focused on housing, referrals to other programs was made for women as needs arose. The Blueprint worker called programs to ensure the referral was appropriate. She did attend some initial meetings with women, particularly to MCFD and income assistance offices. What she experienced is that women were sometimes quite overwhelmed and/or in the midst of a crisis and found it challenging to express their needs. Accompanying the woman increased the likelihood of ensuring that her needs were articulated so that they met the mandate of the agency and therefore service would be offered to her.

Empowering women: The Blueprint worker witnessed women feeling empowered through being listened to and really heard. For women, the home had not been a safe place and understanding women's needs in relation to the housing environment was critical. For example, one woman had suffered significant past trauma in a basement. She felt that she could not move into a basement suite. Where others failed to hear the impact of this past trauma, the Blueprint worker listened, validated her experience, and together they took steps to find her housing in some place other than a basement suite. Through being supported, women learned skills to find housing. Some women were able to observe how the Blueprint worker undertook the process of housing and then gradually took on some of these tasks on their own.



³⁰ At the conclusion of the project, the Blueprint worker recommended a two-session intake process in order to ensure all intake tasks were completed in a timely manner.

7. Community A Short-term Outcomes for Blueprint

7.1 Perspectives of Community A Community Service Providers

In order to gain a better understanding of the community context of services for women fleeing violence, an online survey was sent out to community agencies inviting them to give their perspectives on the service strengths and gaps for women fleeing violence as well as whether they see a role for a specialized worker who could work with women as they move on from transitional housing.

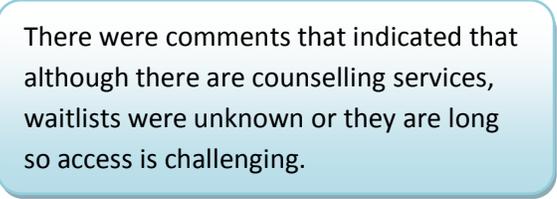
Participants

27 service providers completed an online survey. They represented four sectors: RCMP (52%); social work (22%); counselling services (15%); and victim services (11%).

Community Services for Women

Community service providers were asked to identify services which are available in their community for women. Numerous services for women were identified. Five main organizations from which women can receive services were identified: RCMP, The Blueprint Agency partner, The Community Resource Centre, MCFD³¹ and the local hospital.

(**Bolded services** were those identified by more than one service provider).

Counselling	Shelter/ Women-focused services	Legal/Policing	Financial	Other
Stopping the Violence	Safe Home	RCMP	Service BC	Hospital
Adult Mental Health services	Transition House³² (1.5 hours away)	Legal assistance	Financial services (service not specified)	MCFD
Substance use counselling	Advocacy			Community living services
Victim services	Support worker			Housing
Children Who Witness Abuse program				
Counselling (women, men, and children)				
Family support				

³¹ One social worker noted that in cases in which involvement by MCFD is mandated, women are less likely to ask for services.

³² Note that during the last six months RCMP referred the majority of women to the Transition House in the larger centre (1.5 hours way) for service as the RCMP have a stronger partnership with this THP. This is reflected in the data compiled by the worker in which none of the new referrals, of the 30 women who completed a survey, were from the RCMP.

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Shortages of Services for Women

Service providers were asked whether they perceived there to be shortages in some areas of service. 67% of service providers indicated that there were shortages, 18% indicated that there was not a shortage of services, and 15% did not respond.

The biggest shortage of services for women, noted by service providers, was in the area of affordable and safe housing, followed by counselling. Service providers also indicated a need for specialised trained workers who can assist women fleeing violence using a women-centred approach. Other less frequently noted areas that were indicated to be of need are in the table below.

Legal/Policing	Financial/ Employment	Shelter/ Women-focused services	Other
Court Services ³³	Physical office for Service Canada in the community	Transition House	Mediation services
Worker to assist women in court	Employment opportunities		Family doctors
Lawyers with training in issues faced by women fleeing violence			Specialised support for women fleeing local religious community
Judges with training in issues faced by women fleeing violence			Public transit (more frequent and more routes)

High Frequency Service Requests

Service providers were asked which services women most requested from them over the past year. The top five areas for which service providers received requests from women were:

1. **Counselling:** By far, the largest number of requests was for counselling services. This included: CWWA programs, child counselling, Stopping the Violence counselling, victim assistance, general counselling, men's counselling, family counselling, substance use counselling, specialized mental health services, wellness promotion programs, safety planning, support groups, and psycho-educational groups to better understand violence.
2. **Legal services:** RCMP support, legal services, peace bonds, restraining orders, custody and access information, probation support, border services support, support and advocacy for women attending court.
3. **Permanent housing:** safe and affordable housing.
4. **Shelter services:** This included a safe home, and the need for a local transition house.
5. **MCFD support:** family advancement worker, child development support, and child and family services.

³³ Community A is part of the Circuit Court and as a result, wait times are longer, according to service providers.

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Other less noted high frequency requests from women are outlined in the table below.

Health and Well-Being	Financial/ Employment	Food and Shelter Needs	Other
Dental care	Education/ training	Food bank	ID replacement assistance
Medical care	Employment assistance	Clothing assistance	Volunteering opportunities
Nutrition information	Budgeting education	Household goods assistance	Animal adoption services
Recreational access	Income assistance applications CPP applications		Childcare programs

The Role of a Specialized Worker to Assist Women to Transition

Finally, service providers were asked how having a specialized worker to help women move from a violent relationship to the community would be helpful. 33% did not respond to the question; 8% indicated that another service provider could assist in this role (victim services worker; worker from a much needed local transition house). 59% of service providers indicated that a worker would be very helpful in Community A but the worker would need to have education and training in a women-centred approach. This would ensure that women's boundaries are respected and reduce the likelihood that women feel further victimized by service providers. Through taking a women-centred approach, the worker would allow the women to take the lead in order that the women felt empowered through working with the worker. Specifically, the worker could be of assistance to women by:

- Listening to women's stories;
- Respecting women's boundaries;
- Respecting women's decisions;
- Providing information to women about services;
- Providing tools for women to help them make healthy decisions;
- Providing women information about options for her situation;
- Providing psycho-educational support about complex family systems;
- Supporting the woman in the choices that she makes;
- Working with women to set achievable goals and monitor success towards meeting goals;
- Addressing any areas of misinformation regarding issues related to fleeing violence in a skillful and empowering manner;
- Working effectively with other community agencies to build a web of support for women;
- Encouraging women to work with other service providers who can best meet their needs; and
- Assisting women in building a natural network of support so that they can gradually become less reliant on agency support.

7.2 Blueprint Feedback from Community A Women: Pre-Piloting

Participants

During the piloting period, 68 women were receiving service from one of three resource workers at the local agency. A total of 49 of the 68 women consented to have their data used in the project.³⁴ Of the 49 women, 30 completed a baseline survey. 11 of the 30 (37%) women were new service recipients who came to the agency during the piloting of the Blueprint project. The remainder of the service recipients had received service for periods ranging from one month to four years prior to the commencement of the Blueprint project. There were 12 women for whom both a baseline and post-survey were completed.

A total of 1,213 support hours were provided to the 49 women during the project (this represents the services of three workers). Twenty-six of these women had children.

When considering the 49 women, the number of hours of service per women during the Blueprint pilot ranged from 1 hour to 117 hours (average of 25 hours of service per woman). When only the 11 women who were new service recipients during Blueprint are considered, service hours ranged from 5 hours to 37 hours (average of 15 hours of service per woman).

Baseline Survey Results: Demographics

Age range: Participants ranged from 26-77 years of age (median age of 46).

Ethnicity: 93% identified as Caucasian; 3.5% Latino; 3.5% Aboriginal.

Sexual orientation: 83% identified as heterosexual; 7% as bisexual; 7% as Lesbian; 3% as non-sexual.

Birthplace and Language: 93% of women were born in Canada; 7% were born outside of Canada. 97% indicated that they felt more comfortable using English to communicate.

Educational background: 33% of women had completed some high school; 33% had received a high school diploma; 13.5% had some college education; 17% had a college diploma; 3.5% had a University degree.

Children under 12: 61% reported having no children under the age of 12. 39% reported having one or more child under the age of 12 (median 2 children). All of the women had their children under 12 living with them.

³⁴ 34 of the 49 of the women were considered ongoing service recipients at the end of the Blueprint piloting period.

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Children ages 13-18: 77% reported having no children ages 13-18. 13% reported having one or more child ages 13-18 (median of 2 children ages 13-18). 25% of children ages 13-18 were living with the women. Data was not available for 10% of women.

Perpetrators of Violence: Partners or ex-partners were predominantly the perpetrators of violence. Family members were also perpetrators of violence as reported by a small number of women. Eight women (27%) reported experiencing violence by more than one person. Data was not available for 18% of women.

An Overview of Services Provided to Women

The following table outlines the number of women receiving supports (e.g., having a worker attend a meeting, assisting with completing paperwork, referring to another service) in various service areas and the number of service hours that the worker provided in those areas. Women received an average of 7 different services (range of 0 – 16 services per woman). The six top areas of support are noted in bold.

Service Area	Number of Women Receiving Support in the Service Area	Range of hours that an individual woman received in the service area	Total number of hours that the three workers provided service
Legal (custody, criminal, property division)	34	.25 - 18 hours	216 hours
Life skills/parenting	30	.25 - 22 hours	113 hours
Housing (rental subsidy, purchasing/selling a house, non-profit housing, landlord dispute, rental)	27	.25 -11 hours	80 hours
Income assistance	26	.25 - 11 hours	82 hours
Safety planning	21	.25 - 40 hours	120 hours
RCMP	19	.25 - 7 hours	45 hours
Counselling-related	19	.25 – 4 hours	18 hours
Health issues	18	.25 -18 hours	56 hours
Referrals to Stopping the Violence counselling program	17	.25 – 4 hours	12 hours
Mental health	12	.25 – 3 hours	9 hours
Bank issues	11	.25 – 2 hours	8 hours
MCFD	11	.25 – 35 hours	93 hours
Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) and other pension issues	9	.25 – 4 hours	12 hours
Taxes	8	.25 – 7 hours	12 hours
Furniture	9	1 hour	9 hours
Child care	8	.25 – 2 hours	7 hours
Victim Services	7	.25 – 2 hours	6 hours
Family Maintenance Enforcement Program	7	.25 – 2 hours	5 hours
Addiction-related	7	.25 – 5 hours	7 hours

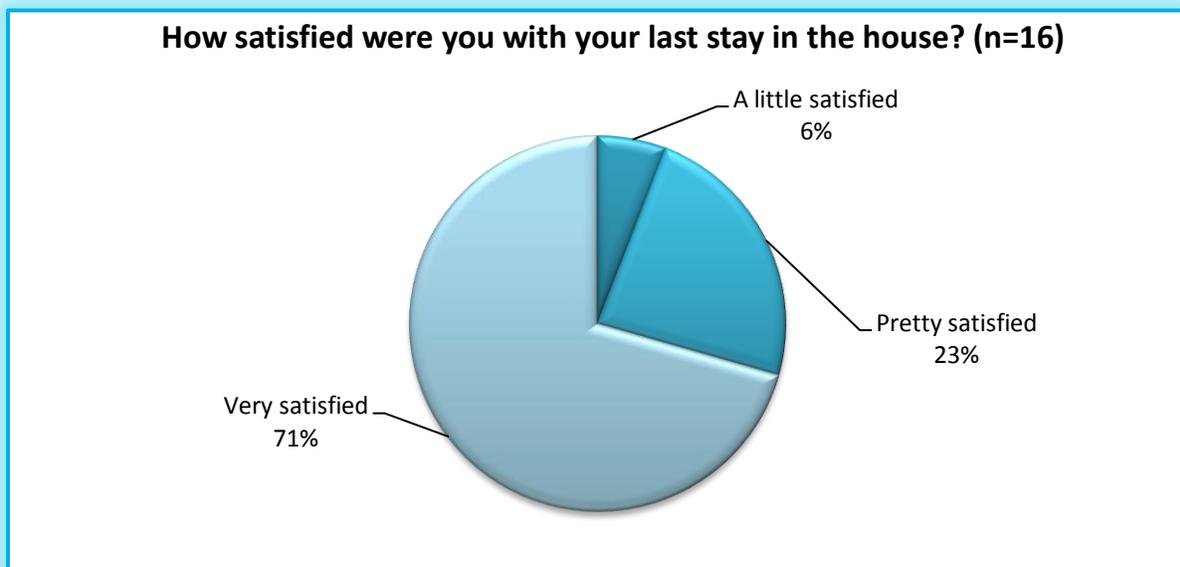
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Service Area	Number of Women Receiving Support in the Service Area	Range of hours that an individual woman received in the service area	Total number of hours that the three workers provided service
Children who Witness Abuse program	5	.25 – 3 hours	6 hours
Probation	5	1-2 hours	6 hours
Safe Home/Transition House	5	.25 – 1 hours	4 hours
First Nations social services	4	.25 – 3 hours	5 hours
Employment insurance	4	3 hours	3 hours
Transportation	4	.25 – 5 hours	6 hours
BC Representative for Children and Youth	3	.25 – 10 hours	13 hours
Family Advancement Worker	3	1 – 18 hours	22 hours
Food Bank	2	.25 – 2 hours	2 hours

Baseline Survey Results: Past Supports and Services

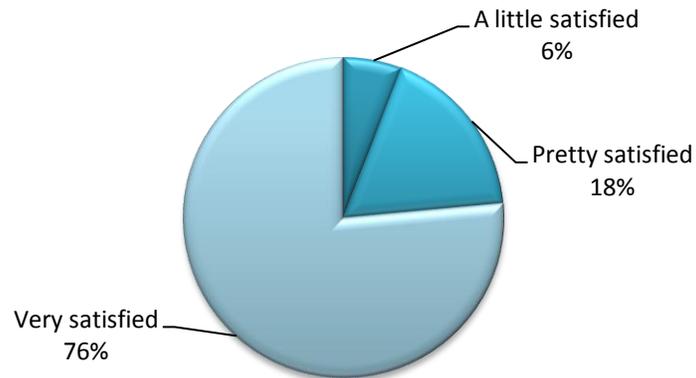
Past Safe Home, Transition House, Second Stage House Stays: 16 women (54%) reported previous stays in a safe home, transition house, or second stage housing. They had 1 to 4 previous stays (median 2 stays).

Women were asked to reflect on their last stay in a safe home, transition house or second stage house as they responded to the following questions.

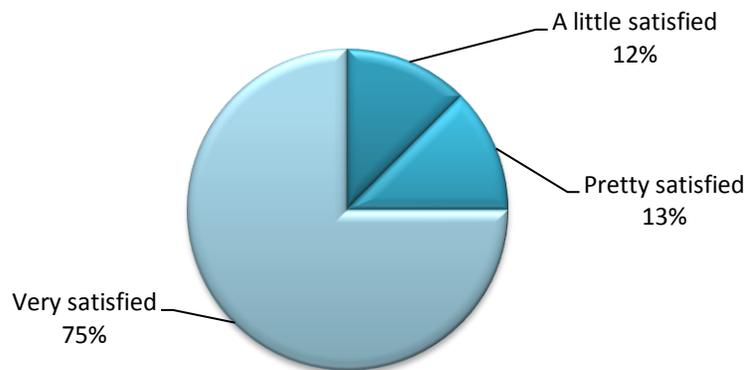


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How satisfied were you with the staff in the house? (n=20)



How satisfied were you with the programs and services in the house? (n= 19)



Helpful Past Services

Women were asked about past services that they found to be helpful. The top five areas of helpful past services were:

1. General emotional support;

"The support of the people at the safe homes were [sic] extremely important. They helped by reassuring and comforting and just talking through difficult times and situations."

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2. Legal advice and guidance (e.g., assistance to secure legal aid, assistance filling out affidavits);

“The support workers were very important in organizing legal aid for me and helping me with important documents as I have had no experience with this.”

3. Referrals to mental health support;
4. Being able to stay in a safe home or transition house; and
5. Assistance with accessing financial aid.

“Getting me set up on assistance when I was unemployed.”

Other helpful services noted by one or two women were:

- Support from RCMP (e.g., escorts to allow women to get belongings from the family home);
- Having a support worker attend medical and legal appointments with the women;
- Receiving passes to recreation centres;
- Assistance with transportation (e.g., giving rides, giving bus passes); and
- Teaching the woman about the landlord and tenancy act.

Unhelpful Past Services

Women were asked about past services that they found to be unhelpful. The top two areas of services found to be unhelpful were:

1. Lack of perceived support from MCFD; and
2. Slow access to income assistance services.

Other less frequently mentioned aspects of services found to be unhelpful were:

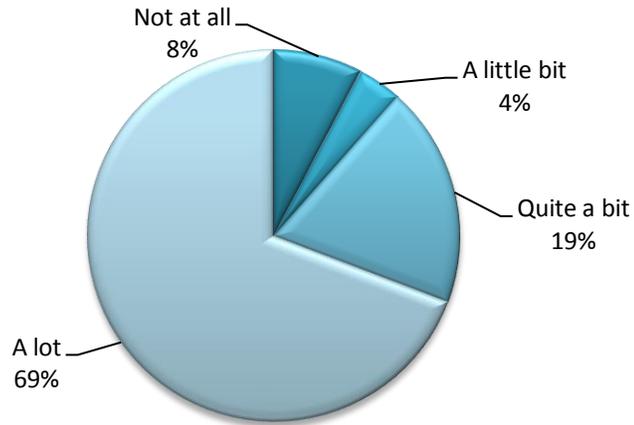
- Feeling forced to get their belongings from the family home;
- Participating in a women’s group that created stress; and
- Feeling trapped in the safe home or transition house.

“The theory of keeping me behind locked/secured doors is understood but being kept there without even a small green space is inhumane. It served only to make me feel more victimized.”

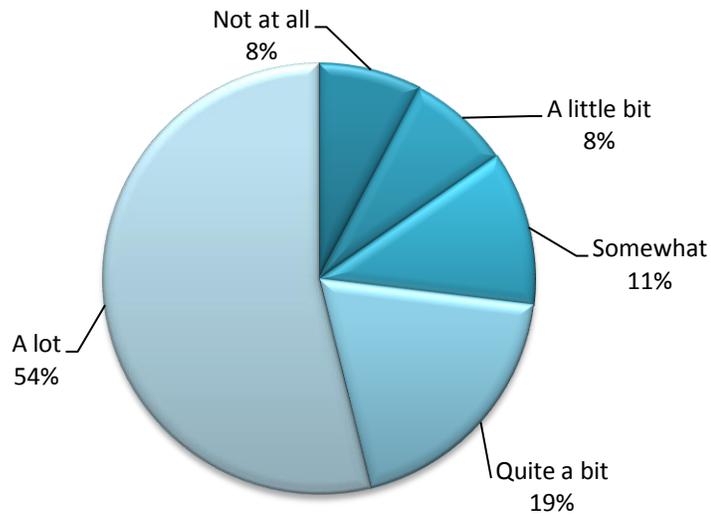
The Blueprint Pilot Project: Early Outcomes

Women were asked to reflect on the past services they received as they responded to the following questions.

When you had services in the past, did you feel like you were being listened to by workers? (n=26)

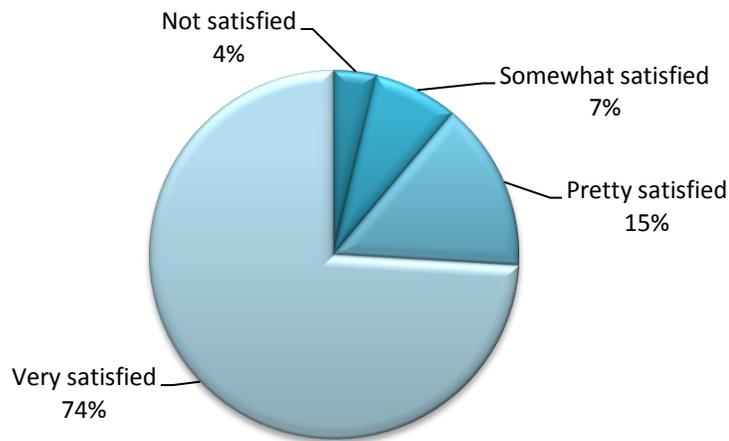


When you had services in the past, did you feel like you were treated like a person who can make good decisions? (n=26)



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Overall, how satisfied were you with the help you received in the past? (n=27)



Perceived Gaps in Services

Women were asked to think about frustrating aspects of the past services and supports they received and ones that they wanted to receive after leaving a violent situation. By far the biggest gap experienced by women was the difficulty in accessing counselling for themselves and/or their children due to long waitlists. In addition to counselling, women noted:

- Difficulty accessing income assistance and living on the amount provided;
- Lack of support from the RCMP;

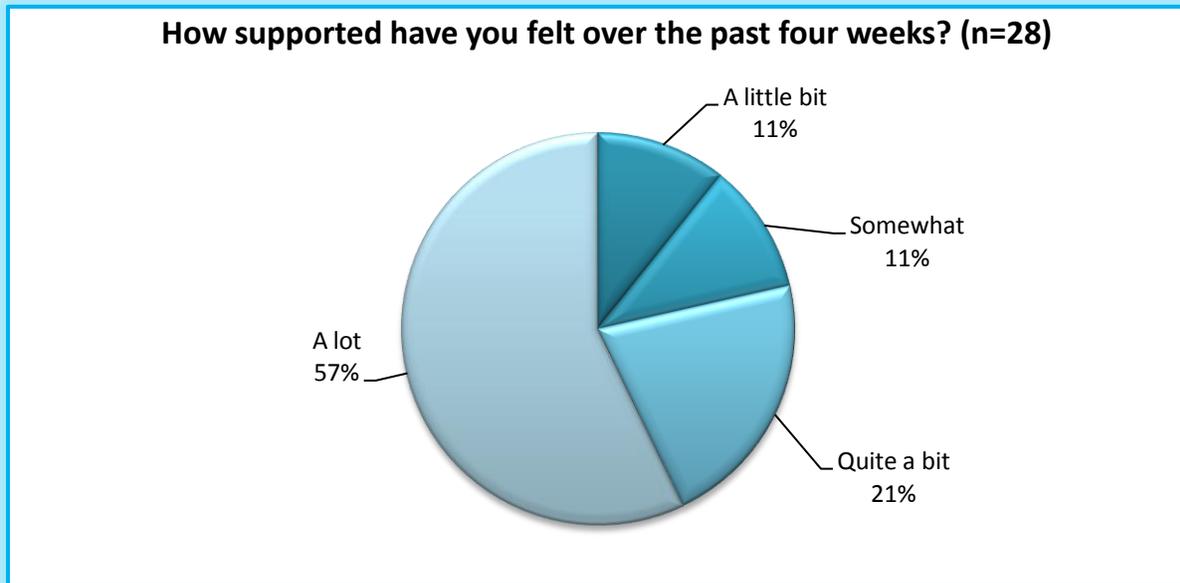
“The way RCMP treated me - always siding with the man.”

- Uncoordinated services for women after they leave a transitional housing program; and
- Access to affordable housing.

The Blueprint Pilot Project: Early Outcomes

Current Supports and Services

Women were asked to consider their current situation and the level of support they have experienced in the last four weeks as well as the supports and services that they need.



Women's Most Pressing Needs

Women noted several pressing current needs. The top six most pressing needs that women have are:

1. Counselling;
2. Transportation;
3. Safety planning assistance;
4. Assistance with accessing medical services/needs (e.g., medication, glasses, family doctor);
5. Affordable housing; and
6. Legal advice and guidance.

Other less frequently noted needs were: food, childcare subsidy, financial assistance, employment support, clothing, phone, and advocacy support.

The Blueprint Pilot Project: Early Outcomes

Baseline Survey Results: Ways in Which the Blueprint Worker Can Help

By far, the biggest way in which women felt that the Blueprint worker could be helpful is by offering ongoing support through listening and working to understand the experiences of women.³⁵

"The most helpful is if a single support worker was assigned with a method to contact them directly even if simply by voicemail or email; essential to know who that one worker is; and who is charge of my file....rather than whoever is available at the time."

In addition to ongoing support, several women noted needing help applying for income assistance and legal assistance. Less frequent areas of support mentioned were: helping to access programs, help filling out various forms, help prioritizing needs, accompanying women to appointments, ongoing help with safety planning, and provision of transportation.

Baseline Survey Results: Ways in Which the Blueprint Worker May Hinder the Process

According to the women, the most unhelpful thing that the Blueprint worker could do is to push decisions on the women that they are not ready to take on. In addition, the following were things identified as actions that would not be helpful to women.

- Asking 'how are you?';

"Always asking how I am doing. I don't want to think about it. It just makes me cry when she asks how I'm doing. Instead it would be better if she said something like "Nice to see you." or "Glad you could come" or "What are your plans today?". I know she does not mean to hurt me, I'm just so sensitive now."

- Being pushed to do things that a woman is not ready to do;
- Stop offering services;
- Make the woman feel like they are imposing on the agency; and
- Male bash.

³⁵ Based on interviews, almost all women indicated that they preferred to have one worker with whom they could work on an ongoing basis. They preferred one worker as it takes time to develop trust and it was then less likely that they had to repeat their needs etc. to more than one person.

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7.3 Blueprint Feedback from Community A Women: Post-Piloting

Participants

At the end of piloting period, women were invited to give feedback. 17 women completed a post-pilot survey. Of these 17 women, 5 women were new service recipients who began receiving service during the piloting period. The remaining 12 women were ongoing service recipients.

Priorities, Concerns and Goals

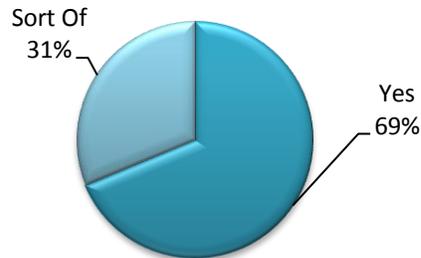
Women were asked a series of questions about their work on priorities, concerns and goals. 47% of women indicated that before receiving service from a worker,³⁶ they knew what needs and priorities that they wanted help with from the worker; 41% indicated that they had some idea of their needs and priorities that they wanted help with; 6% did not know which needs and priorities to focus upon with the worker; and one woman (6%) did not respond.

Areas of Need and Priorities	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Application for government benefits (e.g., income assistance, CPP, PWD)	11	65%
Referral to counsellor	8	47%
Emotional support (e.g., listening, validating)	7	41%
Legal support (e.g., assistance filling out affidavits; attending court with the women)	6	35%
Lawyer referral	4	24%
Housing	4	24%
Assistance with creditors/bankruptcy application	3	18%
Assistance making phone calls to other agencies	3	18%
Assistance applying for legal aid	2	12%
Obtaining needed household items	2	12%
Keeping safe	2	12%
Obtaining proper medical care	2	12%
Legal education (e.g., rights)	2	12%
Getting transportation through public transit	2	12%
Communicating with MCFD	2	12%
Food	1	6%
Help communicating women's family	1	6%
Employment assistance	1	6%
Assistance getting belongings	1	6%
Budgeting skills	1	6%
Warm clothing	1	6%

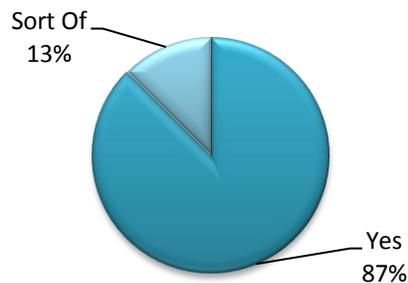
³⁶ The word 'worker' is used in the presentation of the post-pilot results as most women were already involved in receiving services from the community agency prior to the Blueprint project.

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Did talking to a worker help you plan a way to meet your goals and priorities? (n=16)



Did you feel that the needs and priorities were the most important ones? (n=16)

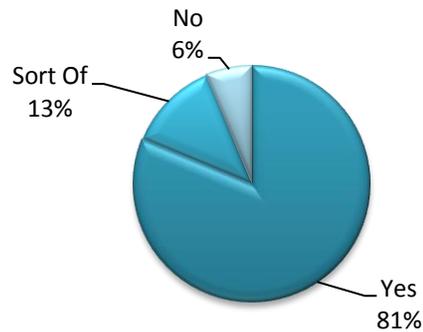


Women's Perceptions of the Strategy for Identifying Needs and Priorities with the Worker

Process Description	Number (%) of Women Identifying This Process				
	One strategy only	Strategy 2 and 3	Strategy 1 and 2	Strategy 1, 2 and 3	Strategy 1, 2, 3, 4
Strategy One: I told the worker my needs and priorities and those are the ones that we worked on.	3 (18%)		4 (24%)	1 (12%)	3 (18%)
Strategy Two: I told the worker my needs and priorities and she suggested some other goals as well.	3 (18%)	1 (12%)			
Strategy Three: I was not sure about my needs and priorities so we talked about my situation and then I was able to name them.	2 (12%)				
Strategy Four: I was not sure about my needs and priorities so the worker told me what I should work on.					

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Were you satisfied with the work you did with the worker on your needs and priorities? (n=16)



Five women offered additional comments that indicated that they felt they had received supportive assistance from the workers. For example:

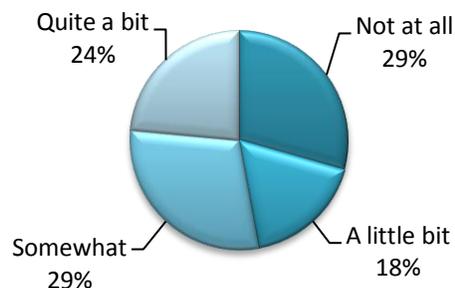
“Workers were non-judgmental and experienced in connecting with the resources that I needed which were many. They made me feel safe and I was relieved to get the help that I so desperately needed. They allowed me time to work on my needs so that I wasn’t emotionally exhausted.”

“They went above and beyond to make sure my needs were helped. They offered group therapy that I found so valuable. My needs were met in all ways. No matter how scared I was, they gave me that safe feeling.”

One woman commented that she felt that she didn’t have enough control of the process at times.

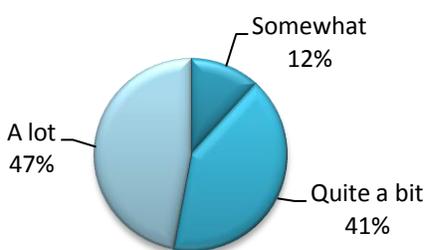
“Coming from a situation where my boundaries have been abused, I still find I have trust issues. I needed to feel in control. The worker at times made me feel like she was taking control so therefore at times I felt I needed to deal with things alone and in my way, on my terms.”

Did you find the process of identifying your primary needs and goals overwhelming? (n=17)



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Did you find that your primary needs and concerns were adequately and effectively addressed? (n=17)



Areas of Needs and Priorities that Women Still Need at the Conclusion of the Pilot

Areas of Need and Priorities that still need to be addressed	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Ensuring that there is ongoing support	5	29%
Employment/Employment readiness training	4	24%
Legal assistance	4	24%
Housing	4	24%
Counselling	3	18%
Group meeting support	2	12%
Post-secondary training	2	12%
Assistance with rental issues	2	12%

Areas of Frustration in Trying to Meet Needs and Priorities

Areas of Frustration	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Waiting for answers from government agencies	5	29%
Too few or long waits for appointments; no drop-in appointments	5	29%
Regulating ones' emotions	3	18%
No phone; no internet	2	12%
Poor communication with lawyer	1	6%
Not having transportation	1	6%
Stress	1	6%
Limited finances	1	6%
Working with MCFD	1	6%
Finding suitable housing	1	6%
Being isolated in the safe home	1	6%
Having to explain one's story too many times	1	6%
Getting help moving	1	6%
Getting belongings from the house in light of no contact order	1	6%

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Women comment on being isolated at the safe home:

"It was hard at first to be isolated and unable to communicate or visit loved ones even if it is in your best interest for your safety. Being isolated made me want to run but I stayed because I had nowhere to run to."

Women comment on communicating with the worker:

"Sometimes we didn't communicate enough or were too confidential to outsiders who I asked them to contact."

"Not being able to drop by and speak to someone."

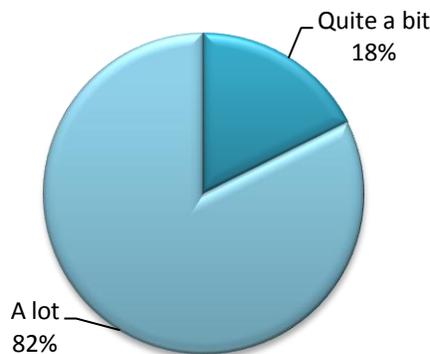
Women's Experiences Working with the Worker

Meetings and Phone Contact

Women were asked to indicate how many times they had met with and had spoken on the phone with a worker. Women reported meeting with the worker one to 'dozens of times'. Women reported talking on the phone with the worker from zero times³⁷ to several times.³⁸ When only considering the five women who began services during the Blueprint project, number of meeting times ranged from one to four meetings and telephone calls ranged from zero to four.

Interactions with the Worker

Did you feel like you were listened to by the worker? (n=17)

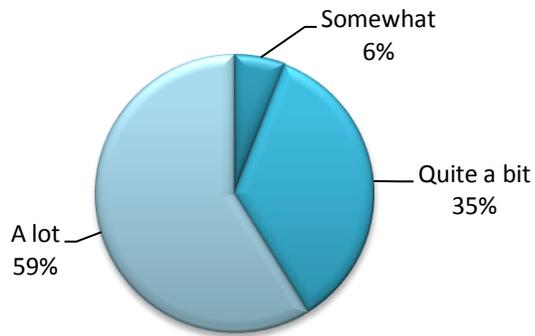


³⁷ There were women who did not have a phone.

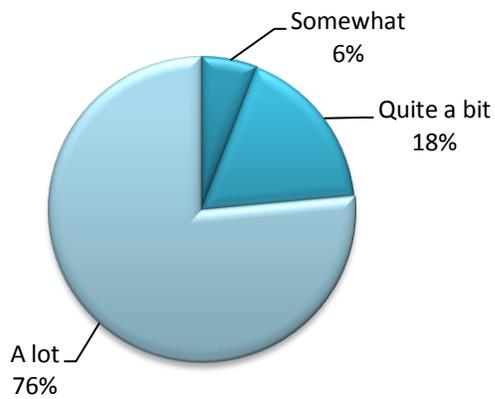
³⁸ As many of the women were longer term service recipients of the agency and they did not know about the Blueprint project, they reported on their overall contact with the agency.

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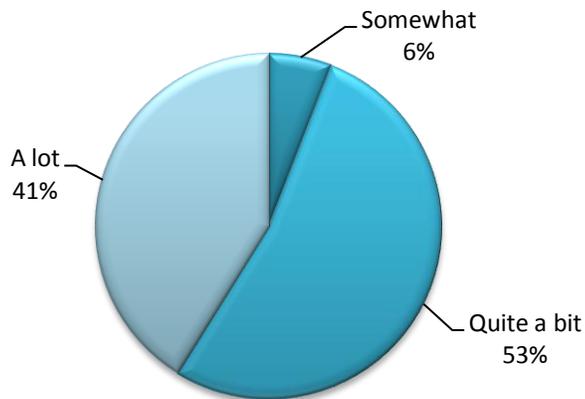
Did you feel like you were treated like a person who can make good decisions? (n=17)



How supported did you feel by the worker? (n=17)



How understood did you feel by the worker? (n=17)



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Ways in Which the Worker was Helpful

Ways in Which the Worker was Helpful	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Listening; understanding; and providing support	15	88%
Providing information, suggestions	4	24%
Helping plan a way to meet goals	3	18%
Helping to keep woman feeling positive, confident	2	12%
Helping to fill out forms	2	12%
Making calls to the lawyer	1	6%
Accessing counselling	1	6%
Advocating for needs	1	6%

Women comment on ways in which the worker was helpful:

“The Blueprint worker was compassionate and specific about how my needs could be met. Her suggestions were abundant.”

“Made me feel welcome; interested in my problems; made me feel comfortable.”

“Keeping me on a positive path and to keep me focused knowing that all my needs would be met and to know that I would not have to worry about things that she would be there to help me work out everything until I was satisfied.”

Ways in Which the Support Could Have Been Enhanced

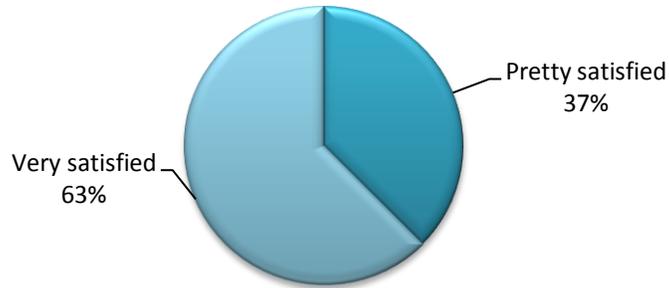
Ways in Which the Support Could Have Been Enhanced	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Having a way to contact the worker faster	3	18%
Having access to a phone and internet (without being monitored and without an appointment)	2	12%
Group counselling	1	6%
Honoring religious diversity	1	6%
Having more support at court	1	6%
Being allowed to communicate with family while at the safe home	1	6%
Less secrets that a woman felt she had to keep about her situation	1	6%
In-home support	1	6%

Women comment on the desire for enhanced communication:

“Creating a faster way for me to connect and communicate- not a formulated process that took a lot of extra time.”

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Overall, how satisfied were you with the help you received during the Blueprint project? (n=16)



Support from Other Women

Seven (41%) of the women had participated in a group in the past.³⁹ Frequency of meetings was three to four times a week. Six of the seven (86%) women indicated that the groups were helpful. Women found the groups helpful in the following ways.

- ♦ Helped women feel less alone
- ♦ Learned about self-care
- ♦ Saw other women's lives improving which gave hope
- ♦ Connected to others who understood the situation
- ♦ Developed friendships
- ♦ Worked through trauma
- ♦ Was safe to speak openly
- ♦ Offered structure in one's life

One woman did not find her group experience helpful. She commented that there was '*male bashing*'.

³⁹ There was an empowerment group prior to the beginning of the Blueprint pilot. During the Blueprint pilot, there were not any specific groups for women fleeing violence. Social groups were offered by other community organizations (e.g., a mixed gender senior's social group, a quilting group). There is a women's pre-employment program offered in the community but it is not a regular program.

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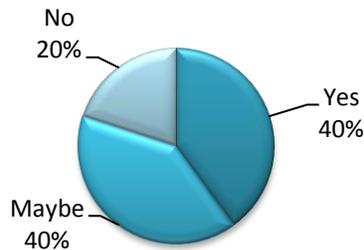
Housing

Women were asked about their living situation at the beginning and end of the Blueprint project.

Housing	Number (%) of women in this housing situation	
	Beginning of Blueprint	End of Blueprint
Own home	10 (59%)	15 (82%)
Treatment	1 (6%)	
Temporary housing	2 (12%)	1 (6%)
Relative's home	2 (12%)	
Accommodation Agreement/Transition House	1 (6%)	1 (6%)
Homeless	1 (6%)	

Two of the women indicated that the worker had helped them find their current housing. One woman was living in her own home and one woman was living in temporary housing. Women reported paying between \$325.00 and \$1,100.00 (median of \$500.00).

Do you see yourself living in your current home for at least another year? (n=15)



Perspectives on Housing	Number (%) of women			
	YES	Somewhat	NO	No response
Woman can afford the rent/mortgage (less than 30% of income after taxes)	7 (41%)	0 (0%)	8 (47%)	2 (12%)
Home feels safe (e.g., location, secure window and doors)	13 (76%)	3 (18%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)
There is enough room for everybody	13 (76%)	0 (0%)	3 (18%)	1 (6%)
Home needs repairs	3 (18%)	2 (12%)	11 (64%)	1 (6%)
Home is close to public transportation	11 (65%)	0 (0%)	5 (29%)	1 (6%)
Home is close to community services	13 (76%)	0 (0%)	2 (12%)	2 (12%)
Home is comfortable	13 (76%)	1 (6%)	2 (12%)	1 (6%)

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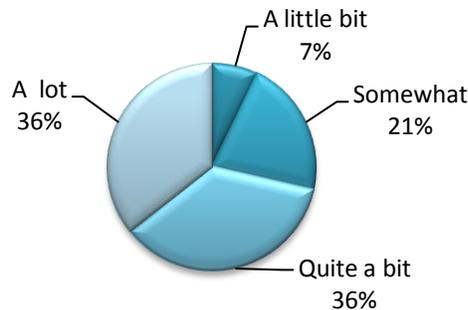
Day-to-Day Living

Three of the 17 women (18%) reported that they were employed; seven of the 17 women (41%) were receiving government assistance (e.g., income assistance, CPP, etc.); and the remaining 7 women (41%) did not respond to the questions or reported not receiving wages or government assistance. Monthly income, as reported by 12 women ranged from \$180.00 to \$2,000.00 per month (median income of \$1475.00).

Community Supports

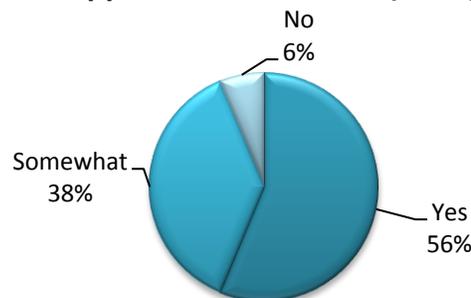
Women were asked about various aspects of community supports in their area.

How well do agencies work together in your community? (n=14)



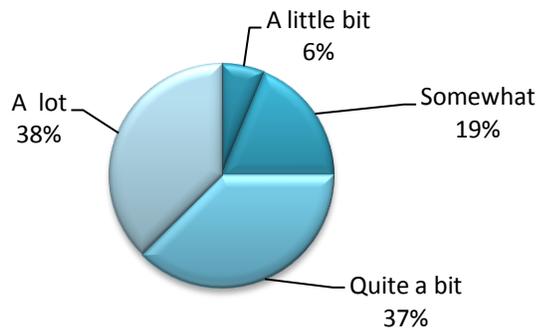
One woman commented that the services would be more effective if they communicated more with one another. Another woman commented that due to the type of work (e.g., keeping women's whereabouts unknown so that they stay safe) that the Blueprint partner agency does with women, it is hard to raise awareness. When asked how community supports and services could be improved in the area, seven women indicated that they wanted more of specific services. Specifically noted were: an income assistance office, Service Canada office, increased bus services, more counsellors, more training, more subsidized housing, more support workers, and more safe homes/transition homes.

Since working with the worker, do you know where to go for supports and services? (n=16)

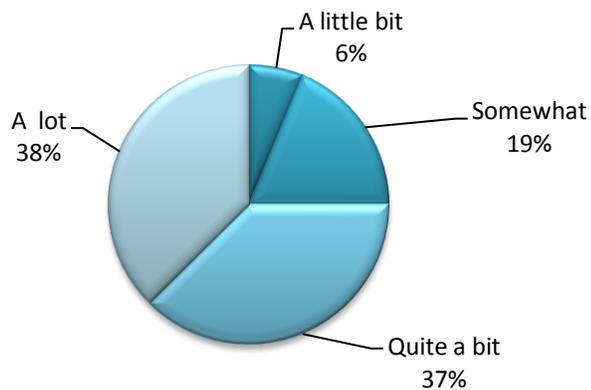


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How confident do you feel that you will be able to get the supports and services you still need? (n=16)



How supported have you felt in the last two weeks? (n=16)



Women were invited to make final comments.

"This service is very necessary thing. We live in a depressed area and services like this are always needed."

"[Town] needs more services and expand their centre to include more housing, shelter, staff, private location out of town center; very helpful and supportive."

"It's terrific that women are beginning to get the attention and services very much needed but the men need a lot of assistance so we can relate gender to gender; I'd like to see more emphasis put on learning communication, problem solving skills along with how to be assertive (rather than be aggressive)."

"Women need the support of this service. I am an older woman with grown children. I can't imagine the stress and emotional turmoil of a young mother going through abuse, divorce etc. Everyone needs a helping hand to give direction and goals. To me this is an essential service."

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7.4 Community A Post-Blueprint Pilot Interviews with Women

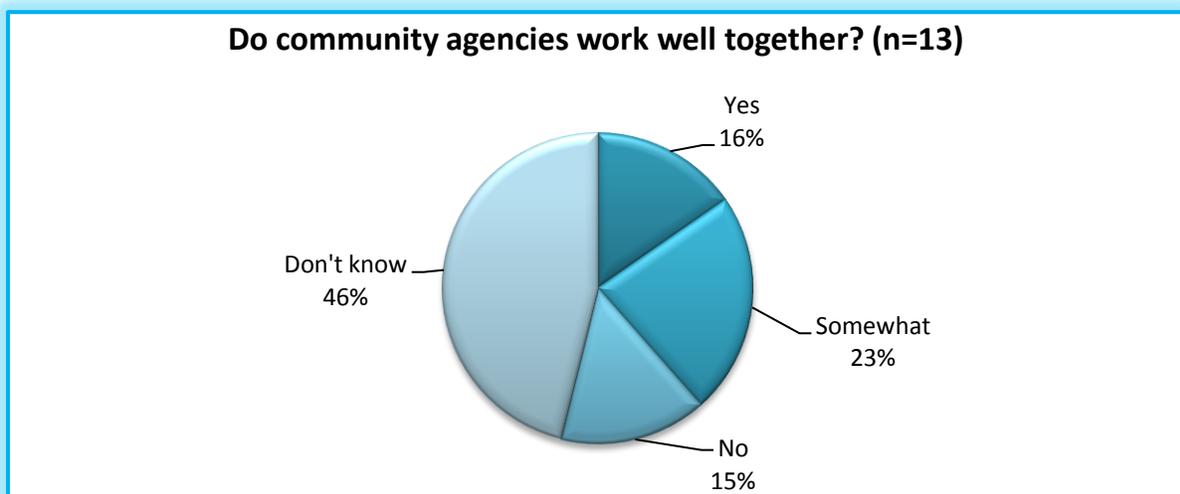
Thirteen women participated in a post-Blueprint interview in order to offer insights on several aspects of their experience of receiving services as a result of fleeing violence. All the women identified a worker other than the Blueprint worker as the worker with whom they had had the most contact.

Participants: Women ranged from age 26-77 years of age (median age: 44). Women had received service from the Blueprint partner agency from two months to 10 years (median time of service: 2 years). There were five women who had started receiving service during the Blueprint project. Five of the women had children. The remaining eight women lived alone. Eight women were receiving income assistance; 3 women were employed; and two women were receiving government CPP and OAS. All but one woman was in permanent housing.

Past Support from Women-Serving Organizations: 3 of the 13 women indicated that they had received support in the past from women-serving organizations. Three women had received services from the Stopping the Violence (STV) Program; 2 women had been in a Transition House; and 1 woman had accessed the Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Program for her children. An additional woman had tried to access the CWWA program but due to long waitlists, was unable to receive service.

Of the women who had accessed the STV program, two of the women found it helpful. One woman commented that she needed to talk but felt like they couldn't do anything for her. The woman who was able to access the CWWA program found it helpful for her children. With respect to the Transition House stay, one woman found it helpful while the other did not.

Collaboration Among Community Agencies: Women were asked their opinions with regard to whether they thought community agencies in their area work well together.



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Overall, women had some involvement with multiple agencies (e.g., Income assistance office, MCFD) or limited involvement (e.g., Blueprint partner agency only and one other agency). Most women viewed the role of the Blueprint partner agency as a key player in coordinating services among community agencies. A worker from the Blueprint partner agency was generally involved in any interactions (e.g., making the calls for the women) that women had with outside agencies. The two exceptions appeared to be the STV and CWWA programs in which the Blueprint partner agency made the initial referral and then the women worked with a counsellor in the STV or CWWA program. Overall, women noted communication could be enhanced between agencies.

“I have had to retell the same story over and over and over again. It’s gets a little overdrawn.”

Two women commented that there is not a great deal of community awareness about the services and supports offered at the Blueprint partner agency. As a result of this, rumors tended to spread within the community as to what goes on at the agency and some of these rumors are false. The low levels of public awareness was thought to be a barrier for some women in need of supports who may not approach the agency due to a lack of accurate information about the available services.

Assistance from the Worker with Accessing Services:

Women were asked about the service and supports they received from the worker. They reported the following areas of assistance.

Areas of Assistance	Number of women identifying this area
Emotional support	6
Applying for income assistance	5
Housing support	5
Legal support	5
Completing various government paperwork	4
Safety planning	3
Budgeting	2
Food	2
Referral to counselling	2
Moving/getting belongings	2
Christmas Hampers	2
Employment support	1
Transportation support	1
Women’s group	1
Advocacy	1

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Leading the process: In getting assistance to access these services, 6 women indicated that the worker directed the process (however 2 women noted that after a period of time, they felt stronger and then they took the lead); 5 women indicated that the woman and the worker worked together on deciding next steps; and 2 women indicated that they themselves led the process.

Women commented on the workers leading the process....

“The ladies [workers] were doing that [leading the process] for me because I felt so lost. When it came to dealing with it, I felt very overwhelmed and very confused and the ladies were the ones that got me going in the right direction and led me where I needed to go for information or for whatever kind of help I needed. I’m still getting quite a bit of help through all of this. They are the ones who have initiated everything to make sure I am going along the right path.”

“I had no idea of how to start and they definitely did get me where I needed to go.”

Women commented on joint leadership....

“They would help me figure the right way through it. I’ve never been through this before.”

‘Helping me have knowledge on where I needed to take the lead.’

Women were asked about outstanding areas of need at this point in time. Several areas of need were identified.

Areas of Need	Number of women identifying this area
Emotional support	4
Counselling	3
Legal aid/support	3
Assistance with children’s needs (e.g. care, food, recreation)	3
Financial assistance	2
Assistance dealing with creditors	1
Completing government applications	1
Housing support	1
Employment support	1

Growth in confidence: One of the 13 women indicated that she felt more confident as a result of the services she received. Two of the women indicated they felt somewhat more confident as a result of the supports and services (one of these woman noted that she still preferred to have a worker present with her for meetings). One woman indicated that she is less confident as she had a negative experience with the Blueprint partner agency. The remaining women indicated no change and that they relied on the Blueprint partner agency and preferred to have them involved with other agencies and for ongoing

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support. It was important for them to know that the Blueprint partner agency was there for them should needs arise.⁴⁰

“I still prefer coming in here [Blueprint partner agency] when we are dealing with stuff so everything is recorded and down on paper so if ever anything comes back on me, I have proof, I have witnesses and stuff like that so I still prefer coming in here so that I can have that as a backup with me because there are a lot of things that seem to be construed.....and sometimes having a witness or having it on paper is nice to have that backup.”⁴¹

Areas of growth in confidence:

“I guess I can start making decisions on my own. I don’t need to question myself so much and say ‘I don’t know what I am doing.’ There’s many decisions I am certain to be able to make all on my own and not feel that I need to go back to them because I am so overwhelmed and lost with everything but I do know if I am getting in that situation, I can always go back here.”

“I mostly deal with income assistance by myself now.”

“Just made me believe in myself and do what I need to do for my kids.”

Biggest Challenges with Housing: Five women identified challenges in finding suitable housing.

- ◆ Finding a home that allows pets
- ◆ Understanding how to set up utilities
- ◆ Finding housing that is affordable
- ◆ Finding housing that is central and close to transit
- ◆ Dealing with judgment towards women on income assistance who have children

“Some of them seem not anxious to rent to someone on assistance. This was hard for me because I have never been on assistance before. I had always worked before and it was just an interim period where I didn’t expect to be unemployed. I would try to explain it to them - why I am on assistance and that I am seeking employment, I am sure that they had heard that before.”

- ◆ Affording high utilities

⁴⁰ Eleven women noted that they felt more secure knowing that the service was there should they need it. One woman indicated that she no longer needed the service and one woman noted that due to negative experiences, she would not access the service again.

⁴¹ Woman indicated that she attends some appointments alone but prefers to have worker to go with her to court and police station for any matters.

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Areas for service enhancements: 11 of the 13 women indicated that they were pleased with the services they have received from the Blueprint partner agency.

"I don't know if they could have done more. I think they have gone above and beyond."

"I know that I can go to them anytime."

"I haven't found where they have let me down in any areas. They do a good job. They are informed."

"They tried their best for me in everything."

One woman noted that she felt victimized by the Blueprint partner agency as a result of several negative interactions. She commented that among the women she knows who use the services of the Blueprint partner agency, it appears that individual women have different levels of access to workers. Her perception is that women who follow the advice of the Blueprint partner agency receive more access to services (e.g., quicker appointments, more access to information). Another woman felt pressured, at times, to take action which she was not ready to take.

A small number of women had some **suggestions** of ways services could be enhanced.

- ◆ Having one main worker (12 of the 13 women preferred this option)

"For the longest time, I wouldn't go to the women's centre because I am tired to talking to one girl and then two or three weeks talking to another girl. Sure they take notes. They are very good on note taking. Why can't I deal with one lady and one lady only?"

"In early years you are so sensitive and feeling thoughts of guilt....maybe I am asking for too much, just insecurities. They [insecurities] are really upfront and affect my perception of reading other people's body language or hesitations or actions."

- ◆ Allowing the women to take the lead and being aware that a woman knows what is best for herself
- ◆ Giving explicit and implicit messages to women that they are not being a burden on a worker's time
- ◆ Increased flexibility in the way contact can be made with a worker
- ◆ Providing internet and phone access for women to make the calls and do the research they need to get other supports and services
- ◆ Providing ongoing women's support group
- ◆ Access to more resources

"We are small town and there are not a lot of resources. That's not their fault."

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Final Comments

“They’re a real great bunch and they’re doing a great job. There’s been a lot of women in my shoes and probably worse off.”

“They have done a wonderful job. I’ve felt that they have tried their best for me and it is still ongoing. They are all wonderful people.”

7.5 Partnership Development

Partnership development is at varying stages of development in Community A. There is one regular monthly meeting, which the Blueprint worker attended, in which representatives from community agencies come together to network. Some strong partnerships exist with individual lawyers who work with women in the community. These partnerships have been well utilized as legal issues were the largest area of support (based on number of worker hours) during the Blueprint piloting. While there has been some work done program director to program director or worker to program director, there remains the continual challenge of finding the time and resources to strengthen these partnerships while at the same time looking for points of convergences despite different program philosophies and mandates. One consequence of tenuous partnerships is that women fleeing violence sometimes receive conflicting messages from service providers regarding action for them to pursue.

Despite some challenges in the area of partnership development, over the course of the project, the Blueprint worker reported a strengthening partnership with the local First Nations Child & Family Services. Although the Blueprint partner agency works with women and children from First Nations communities, they do at times refer women and children to the First Nations Child & Family Services in order that they receive support that is culturally appropriate.

The Blueprint worker was also involved in a presentation to the RCMP in June 2012. The purpose of the presentation was to update the RCMP on the services of the Blueprint partner agency. This process was undertaken at this time as the local RCMP had had a change in the staff sergeant position.⁴²

A major initiative was participation in an inter-agency assessment team (iCAT) workshop, hosted by the Community Coordination for Women’s for Safety (CCWS)⁴³, North Okanagan Integrated Assessment Team (NOICAT), Community-Based Victim Services, and the Vernon RCMP with the support of EVA BC. This capacity building session ‘*Developing a Collaborative Response to Risk and Safety to Violence Against Women*’. The purpose of this workshop was for community agencies to learn about risk and develop and strengthen local collaborative safety planning for women who are at highest risk for bodily injury or homicide. Agencies in the area have met since the meeting and will continue to meet in order to build off this learning and develop ways that they can increase inter-agency collaboration with the

⁴² The Blueprint partner agency and the RCMP are at the beginning stages of partnership development.

⁴³ For more information on the CCWS, please see <http://evabc.org/ccws>

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goal of supporting and protecting women who are at high risk for harm. The Blueprint worker was an active participant on the CCWS as the group worked to develop a formal protocol, to be vetted among partners, for high-risk assessment. This work is ongoing.

Overall more work will need to be undertaken to strengthen partnerships in the community. Through the strengthening of partnerships with other agencies, a stronger web of support for women fleeing violence will be created.

7.6 Housing development

Affordable housing is a priority of the City council in Community A, senior's groups and the housing society. The average cost (includes rent, utilities, renter's insurance) for a small apartment is \$742.00/month; a two bedroom condo \$1,197.00/month; and a small house \$1,820.00 per month.⁴⁴

Most of women who provided feedback during the Blueprint pilot did not have immediate housing needs as they were longer-term service recipients so the housing needs had been taken care of prior to the beginning of the Blueprint pilot. There were however other housing issues that emerged for some women during the pilot such as landlord-tenant disputes⁴⁵ and sale of property. Housing was secured for two women during the pilot. There continues to be women in need of housing support which is one of the supports that the Blueprint partner agency provides in their work with women. Good relationships have been developed with two real estate companies that manage rentals and BC Housing. At times, this has led to successful permanent housing for women.

The Blueprint worker has encouraged women to begin the process of looking for housing as soon as they know that this will be a need rather than waiting until there is little time to secure housing. In order to help women find housing, a variety of methods are shared with women: real estate management companies; newspaper ads; online ads etc. Searching for housing is done on a case-by-case basis. The women who were looking for housing commented on the lack of housing and the high rents in the area. There have been motels that have been renovated and turned into permanent housing. With one B.C. Housing complex (that accepts seniors and people with disabilities) and 2 non-profit housing complexes, many women must rely on private housing which offers very little relief from high rents.

⁴⁴ Rent calculations from www.workbc.ca/Jobs/CostOfLivingCalculator.aspx

⁴⁵ Please see <http://www.tenants.bc.ca/main/?tenantsurvivalguide> for the recommended resource, 'Tenants Survival Guide'.

8. Community B Short-term Outcomes for Blueprint

8.1 Perspectives of Community B Community Service Providers

In order to gain a better understanding of the community context of services for women fleeing violence, an online survey was sent out to community agencies inviting them to give their perspectives on the service strengths and gaps for women fleeing violence as well as whether they see a role for a specialized worker who could work with women as they move on from transitional housing.

Participants

21 service providers completed an online survey. 20 of the 21 service providers indicated the sector in which they worked. Of these 20 service providers, 35% worked in a transition house or in the outreach sector, 20% worked in the counselling sector, 20% in the social work sector, and the remaining 25% worked in a variety of sectors (i.e., legal support, health related support, family support, community development, advocacy and education).

Community Services for Women

Community service providers were asked to identify services which are available in their community for women. Several specific organizations were identified. (**Bolded services** were those identified by multiple service providers).

Counselling/ Mental Wellness Support	Women-focused services	Food/Home/Clothing	Health	Other
RCMP victim services	Blueprint partner agency	Church Resource Centre	Medical Clinics	Legal assistance
Counselling and mental health support (general)	Blueprint partner agency transition house	Salvation Army Food Bank	STI clinic	Brain Injury Society
Community-Based Victim Assistance	First Nation Emergency Shelter	Soup Kitchen	Positively Pregnant	Income assistance
Crisis intervention (general)	Safe homes	Church thrift store		Ministry of Social Development
Addictions Resource Centre	Women's Centre			District Society for Community Living
Alcoholics Anonymous				College Adult Literacy
First Nations Friendship Centre				Employment support
Canadian Mental Health Association				Low income housing application support
CWWA (child and family support)				Elder abuse information

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Shortages of Services for Women

Service providers were asked whether they perceived there to be shortages in some areas of service. 81% of service providers indicated that there were shortages and 19% did not respond.

While Community B has many services, service providers commented that long waitlists are an issue. In addition, there were comments that resources are stretched very thin in some areas which may impact quality of service. Workers become burnt out due to trying to meet the volume of work. The biggest shortage of timely services for women is in the area of affordable and safe housing followed by low cost or no cost counselling and mental health services (i.e., addictions, concurrent disorders, trauma, anger management, women’s support groups). The table below outlines shortages noted by providers.

Financial/ Employment	Shelter/ Women-focused services	Legal/ Policing	Other
Sustainable employment	Specialised staff who understand the needs of women facing multiple barriers	Greater police support to help women gather belongings from their former home	Interpretation and support services for women who speak minimal English
Employment readiness programs	Additional beds in the transition houses	Low cost legal support for women who do not qualify for legal aid	Food bank that is open more regularly with high quality foods
Increased income assistance to allow women to support themselves (and children)	Greater access to Transition house services for specific populations (women with addictions and mental health issues; senior women; young families)	<p>With the recent government decision to roll the Bridging Program into the new Work BC program come a loss of several services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‣ One-one counselling ‣ Group counselling ‣ Reduction in funds for transportation 	Sustainability of more intense Bridging program
Assistance to split government income to partners so that woman has access to her portion	Second stage housing		Affordable assistance for seniors
Debt consolidation assistance	Shelter and housing for homeless women (who may not be fleeing violence)		Daycare support
Assistance with Person With Disabilities (PWD) application			Support for women who are homeless and at risk for becoming involved in a violent relationship
			Family counselling for women who are not ready to leave situation or who hope to make the situation better

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High Frequency Service Requests

Service providers were asked about the services that women most requested from them over the past year. The top six areas in which service providers received requests from women were:

1. **Counselling:** By far, the largest number of requests was for counselling services. This included crisis counselling, trauma counselling, addictions, concurrent disorders services, couples counselling, conflict resolution, mediation and child counselling.
2. **Permanent housing:** safe and affordable housing.
3. **Assistance with income assistance and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) applications:** This included understanding rights and appealing applications that were denied.
4. **Food**
5. **Shelter services:** This included safe homes and transition house services.
6. **Legal services:** This included services for women who do not qualify for legal aid, low cost or no cost services related to the division of marital property and representation for women charged with assault.

Other less noted high frequency requests from women are outlined in the table below.

Health and Well-Being	Financial/ Employment	Food and Shelter Needs	Other
Free dental care ⁴⁶	Emergency financial aid	Clothing	Transportation
Baby supplies (diapers and formula)	Employment support	Household supplies	Life skills training
No-cost/low-cost home care after surgery (particularly for seniors)	Income tax filing assistance	Furniture	Volunteer opportunities
Personal care items	Child support application assistance	Tenant rights information	Court support
			Support for women whose children are going to be apprehended due to violence in the home

⁴⁶ One service provider indicated that there are dentists who do provide limited no cost services in the area. Women can go on a waitlist.

The Role of a Specialized Worker to Assist Women to Transition

Finally, service providers were asked how having a specialized worker to help women move from a violent relationship to the community would be helpful. 29% did not respond to the question; 5% indicated that all workers should take on the role in assisting women move on from a THP. The remaining 66% of service providers indicated that a specialized worker would be very helpful in assisting women to make this transition. The key benefit of having a specialised worker would be to ensure that women settle into safe and affordable housing, have applied for any benefits for which they are eligible, and that they are linked with community resources (e.g., programs, counselling etc).⁴⁷ This worker would reduce the chaos through being a consistent person in a woman's life as she moves on from a transitional housing program by facilitating the coordination of services. Ideally, this worker would work with women with the goal of reducing service as the women feel increasingly confident that they are connected with the community resources and that they can advocate for future needs as they arise.

One area of differences among service providers is that while several service providers viewed the role of this post-transition house worker as someone who can address housing and other immediate needs in order to help women get to a stable living situation as well as linking the women with community agencies, several other service providers indicated that the role should include counselling given that this is a tremendous unmet need for women. If this were to be included in the role, specialised training would be required by the worker.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Three service providers wanted to see greater partnership work among community agencies in order that services for women can be more coordinated. In addition, by working more closely together, all service providers would have increased awareness of the services available, eligibility criteria, and waitlists. This would also decrease the feeling of chaos that women may experience as they attempt to get services from various service providers.

⁴⁸ In order to offer clinical counselling, the worker would need to have education and training in trauma, addictions, violence against women etc.

8.2 Blueprint Feedback from Community B Women: Pre-Piloting

Participants

During the piloting period, 49 women were receiving service from the Blueprint worker. A total of 18 women completed a baseline survey. Service recipients had received service for periods ranging from one month to six months. There were 5 women for whom both a baseline and post-survey were completed.

A total of 510 support hours to women were provided to the 49 women during the project. Twenty-three of these women have children. The number of hours of service per woman during the Blueprint pilot ranged from 1 hour to 93 hours (average of 10 hours of service per woman).

Baseline Survey Results: Demographics

Age range: Participants ranged from 21-60 years of age (median age of 39).

Ethnicity: 61% identified as Caucasian; 22% Aboriginal; 11% Mixed Ethnicity; and 6% did not identify.

Sexual orientation: 89% identified as heterosexual; 5.5% as bisexual; and 5.5% as Lesbian.

Birthplace and Language: 100% of women were born in Canada.

Educational background: 39% of women had completed some high school; 22% had received a high school diploma; 22% had some college education; and 17% had a college diploma.

Children under 12: 50% of women reported having no children under the age of 12. 50% reported having one or more child under the age of 12 (median of 1 child). 85% of the children ages 12 and under were living with the women.

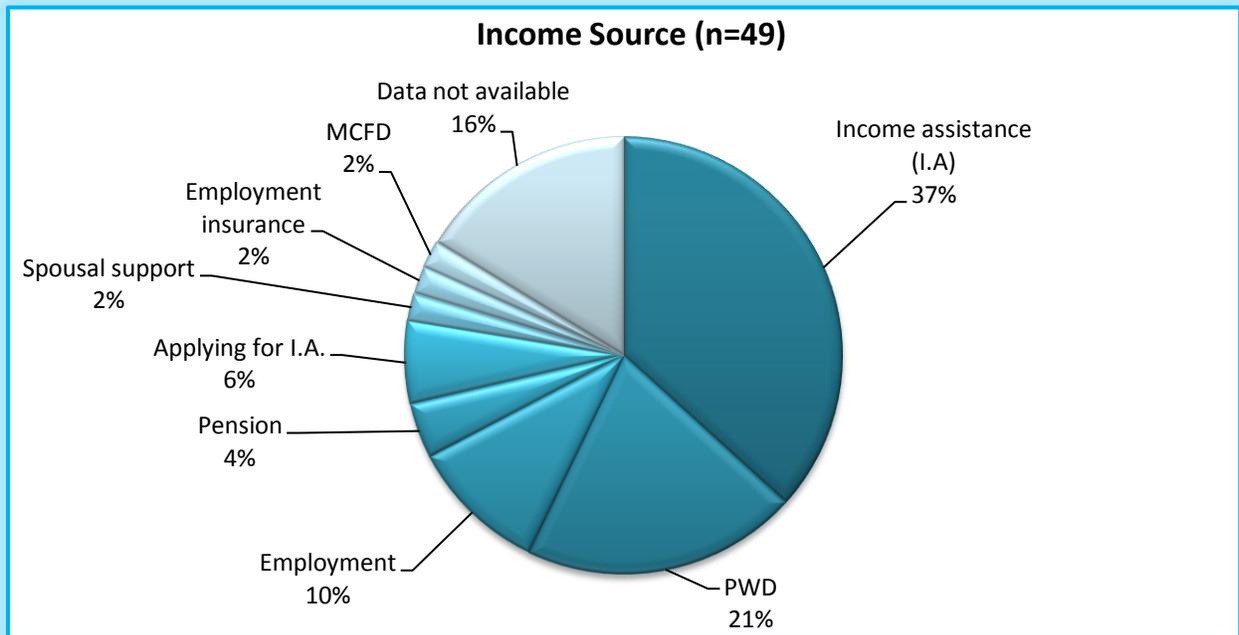
Children ages 13-18: 50% of women reported having no children ages 13-18. 23% reported having one or more children ages 13-18 (median of 2 children ages 13-18). 71% of children ages 13-18 were living with the women. Data was not available for 27% of the women.

Perpetrators of Violence: Partners or ex-partners were predominantly the perpetrators of violence. Family members were also perpetrators of violence as reported by a small number of women. Five women (28%) reported experiencing violence by more than one person. Data was not available for 18% of the women.

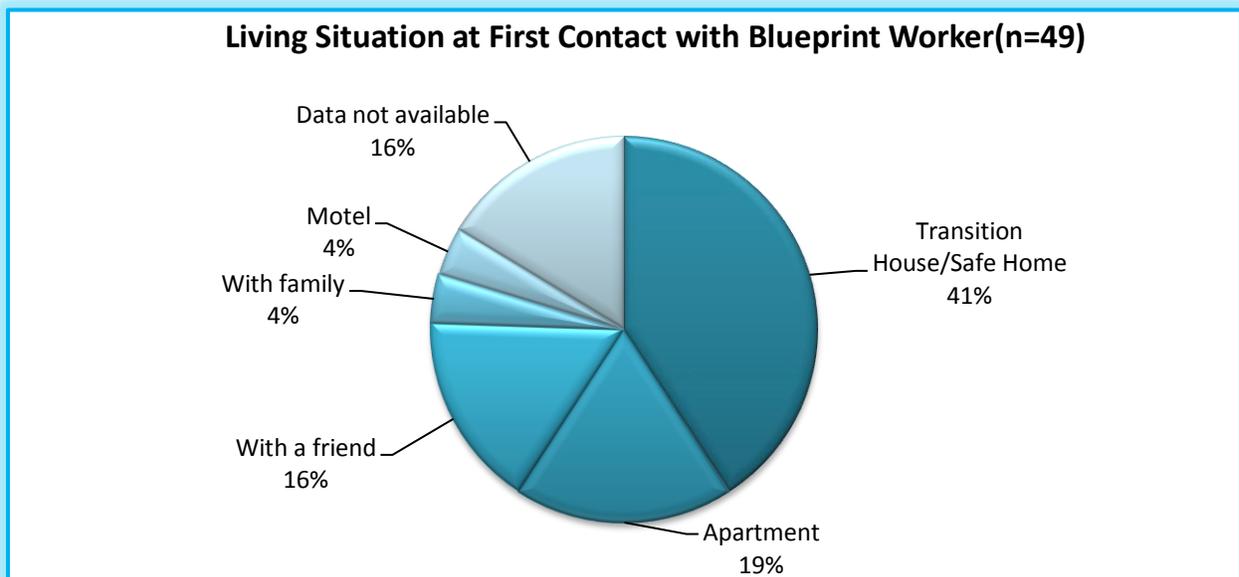
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An Overview of Services Provided to Women

As previously mentioned, the Blueprint worker in Community B focused on supporting women in finding housing – ideally permanent affordable and adequate housing. Of the 49 who contacted or were referred to the Blueprint worker, all but two needed assistance to find housing. The Blueprint worker assisted 28 women to secure housing during the pilot. For women seeking housing, cost of rental was a huge issue given that their sources of income resulted in low monthly income compared to the cost of housing.



When the Blueprint worker first started supporting the women, they lived in a variety of situations.



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While most women worked with the Blueprint worker over time, a small number of women made initial contact and subsequent contact did not occur or the woman left the area. This accounts for missing data. 19% of women were living in an apartment at the beginning of their work with the Blueprint worker but they required assistance to find alternative housing. Among these women, two were being evicted, two lived in substandard conditions, one apartment was for sale, one woman lived in a space that was too small, and one woman could not afford the rent (reasons were not available for two of the women).

Rental Rates in Housing Secured for Women

Type of Housing	Rental Range
Townhome/Duplex	\$1200 - \$1400
House	\$1000
Apartment (one and two bedrooms)	\$650 - \$950
Room in a house/shared accommodation	\$250-\$450
Subsidized housing	Calculated based on income

The following table outlines the number of women receiving supports (e.g., having a worker attend a meeting, assisting with completing paperwork, referring to another service) in various service areas and the number of service hours that the worker provided in those areas. Women received an average of 3 different services (range of 1 – 9 services per woman). The top three areas of support are noted in bold.

Service Area	Number of Women Receiving Support in the Service Area	Range of hours that an individual woman received in the service area	Total number of hours that the Blueprint worker provided service
Housing (rental subsidy, non-profit housing, rental searches)	47	1 – 46 hours	320 hours
Emotional-support related	17	.5 – 22 hours	51 hours
Employment support	11	.5 – 3 hours	9 hours
Income assistance	11	.5 - 1 hours	12 hours
Food Security	9	.5 – 4 hours	12 hours
Bank issues	7	.5 – 6 hours	21 hours
Legal	7	.5 – 2 hours	8 hours
Health issues	7	.5 -3 hours	12 hours
Mental health	7	.5 – 3 hours	10 hours
Persons with Disabilities applications	6	.5 – 4 hours	11 hours
Moving	5	.5 – 6 hours	12 hours
Getting furniture	4	.5 – 2 hours	3 hours
Child care	3	.5 – 4 hours	6 hours
MCFD	3	1 – 6 hours	10 hours
Transportation	3	.5 – 1 hours	2 hours

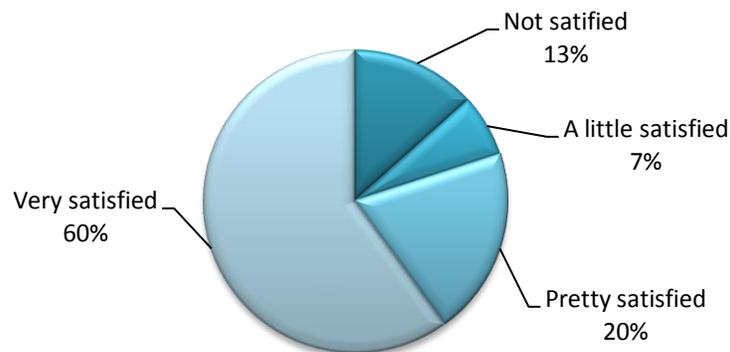
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Baseline Survey Results: Past Supports and Services

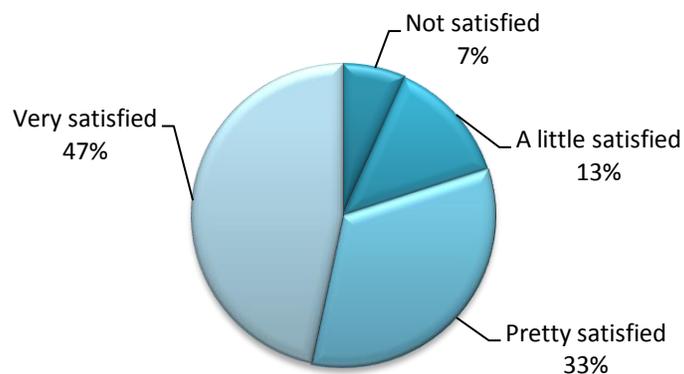
Past Safe Home, Transition House, Second Stage House Stays: 15 women (83%) reported previous stays in a safe home, transition house, or second stage housing. They had 1 to 5 previous stays (median 2 stays).

Women were asked to reflect on their last stay in a safe home, transition house or second stage house as they responded to the following questions.

How satisfied were you with your last stay in the house? (n=15)

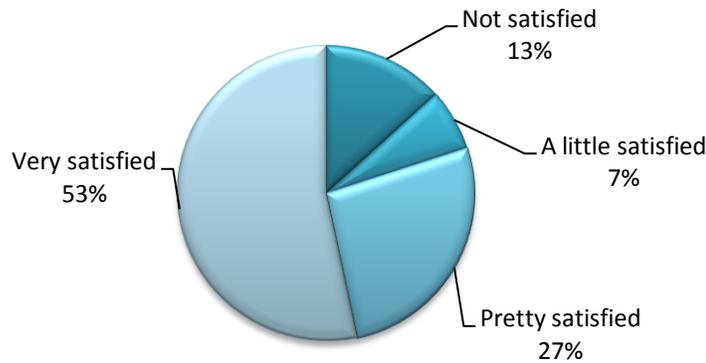


How satisfied were you with the staff in the house? (n=15)



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How satisfied were you with the programs and services in the house? (n= 15)



Helpful Past Services

Women were asked about past services that they found to be helpful. The top four areas of helpful past services were:

1. Counselling services;
2. Transition House support;

"They were able to extend my stay so I could find safe housing and helped me with groceries when I left."

3. Support from Blueprint partner agency; and
4. Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous.

Other helpful services noted by individual women were:

- Thrift Store
- Receiving clothing and food
- Women's Centre
- Church thrift store
- Brain Injury and Homeless Support
- Legal advocate
- Use of a telephone

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Unhelpful Past Services

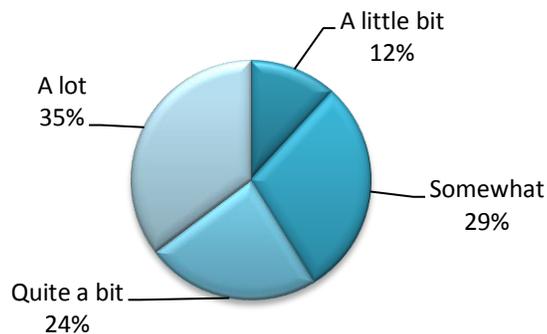
Women were asked about past services that they found to be unhelpful. Three women indicated that they had experienced a lack of understanding at a transition house. Specifically, one woman found having to tell her whole story, upon arriving at the transition house late at night, to be very stressful. Another woman commented that she felt lost at the transition house, and finally another woman was frustrated that no one explained all the community resources to her.

Other areas of frustration included:

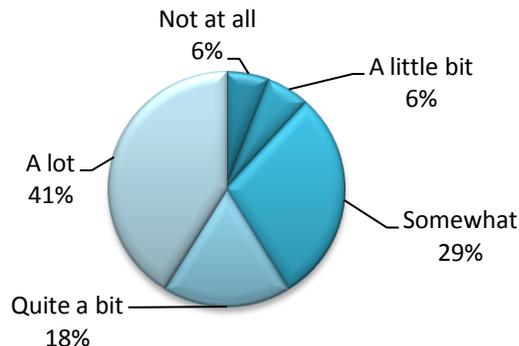
- ◆ An agency not giving the woman accurate estimates of housing availability;
- ◆ An agency having inconsistent appointments;
- ◆ Engaging with a counsellor who listened but didn't interact a great deal; and
- ◆ Having individuals not understand the strong emotions that a woman feels when she is leaving a violent situation and how these emotions impact communication.

Women were asked to reflect on the past services they received as they responded to the following questions.

When you had services in the past, did you feel like you were being listened to by workers? (n=17)

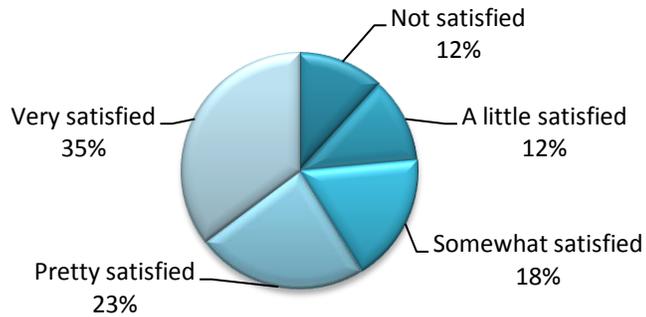


When you had services in the past, did you feel like you were treated like a person who can make good decisions? (n=17)



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Overall, how satisfied were you with the help you received in the past? (n=17)



Perceived Gaps in Services

Women were asked to think about frustrating aspects of the past services and supports they received and ones that they had hoped to receive after leaving a violent situation. The biggest gaps experienced by women were: affordable housing; adequate income assistance in order to live; accessing counselling for themselves and/or their children; and knowing about all the supports and services in the community.

Women indicated that there is not enough subsidized housing and that the available rents in the area are too high. As most women are on income assistance, the housing portion of income assistance is too low to be able to afford housing that is adequate. Another frustration related to finding housing is the lag in wait time in order to receive income assistance which then prohibits a woman from trying to secure some type of housing.

In the area of counselling, long waitlists are a major issue. It appears that more specialized care may involve even longer waitlists. One woman indicated that she had waited over a year for specialised mental health support. When women do reach the top of the waitlist, due to large caseloads, they are often not able to see a counsellor on a regular or relatively frequent (weekly) basis.

Women also noted that it was very difficult to find out about all the services that could be accessed in the community. They had to really look around and find out where all the agencies were in the city.

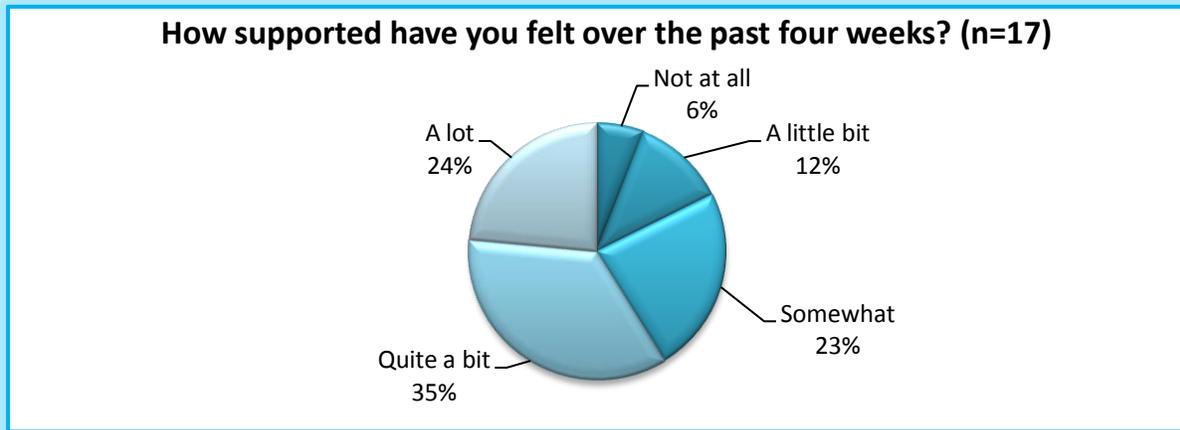
Other frustrations for women included:

- ◆ Perceiving that service providers are judging them or deeming them not worthy of service;
- ◆ Only receiving partial information about service eligibility requirements; and
- ◆ Managing feelings of low self-worth and depression.

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Baseline Survey Results: Current Supports and Services

Women were asked to consider their current situation and the level of support they have experienced in the last four weeks as well as the supports and services that they need.



Women's Most Pressing Needs

Women noted several pressing current needs. The top five most pressing needs are:

1. Housing
2. Counselling
3. Employment
4. Transportation
5. General emotional support

Other less frequently noted needs were food, phone, assistance applying for income assistance, education, and assistance with medical concerns.

Baseline Survey Results: Ways in Which the Blueprint Worker Can Help

By far, the biggest ways in which women felt that the Blueprint worker could be helpful is by assisting women to find housing (i.e., driving women to look at housing, helping complete applications, looking online for housing together, suggesting important questions to ask landlords) and through offering ongoing support to women. Specific types of support that women find helpful are: listening and validating their experiences; offering encouragement; suggesting new ideas; and remaining non-judgmental.

Baseline Survey Results: Ways in Which the Blueprint Worker May Hinder the Process

According to the women, the most unhelpful thing that the Blueprint worker could do is to be critical or insincere. Other than these two behaviors, women could not think of ways in which the Blueprint worker may hinder the process of working with women.

8.3 Blueprint Feedback from Community B Women: Post-Piloting

Participants

At the end of the piloting period, women were invited to give feedback. 10 women completed a post-pilot survey.

Priorities, Concerns and Goals

Women were asked a series of questions about their work on priorities, concerns and goals. 70% of women indicated that before receiving service from the Blueprint worker, they knew what needs and priorities that they wanted help with from the worker; 20% indicated that they had some idea of their needs and priorities that they wanted help with; and 10% did not know which needs and priorities to focus upon with the worker. All women with whom the worker engaged were looking for housing. In this search for housing they wanted the following assistance:

- ◆ Filling out housing applications;
- ◆ Searching online for housing;
- ◆ Posting ads for housing;
- ◆ Transportation to view rentals; and
- ◆ Talking to landlords.

Women also wanted assistance with:

- ◆ Filling out forms to qualify for 'Persons With Disabilities' coverage;
- ◆ Learning how to budget funds;
- ◆ Facilitating communication between community agencies;
- ◆ Getting food vouchers;
- ◆ Learning about legal aid requirements;
- ◆ Getting bus tickets;
- ◆ Getting personal products (e.g., vitamins, personal hygiene products); and
- ◆ Finding support groups.

100% of women agreed that talking to the Blueprint worker helped them develop a plan in order that they could reach their goals. All of the women indicated that the goals that they worked on were the most important ones in their life at the present time. All women were satisfied with the work that they undertook with the Blueprint worker.

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Women’s Perceptions of the Strategy for Identifying Needs and Priorities with the Worker

Process Description	Number (%) of Women Identifying This Process				
	One strategy only	Strategy 2 and 3	Strategy 1 and 2	Strategy 1, 2 and 3	Strategy 1, 2, 3, 4
Strategy One: I told the worker my needs and priorities and those are the ones that we worked on.	3 (30%)		1 (10%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)
Strategy Two: I told the worker my needs and priorities and she suggested some other goals as well.	3 (30%)				
Strategy Three: I was not sure about my needs and priorities so we talked about my situation and then I was able to name them.					
Strategy Four: I was not sure about my needs and priorities so the worker told me what I should work on.					

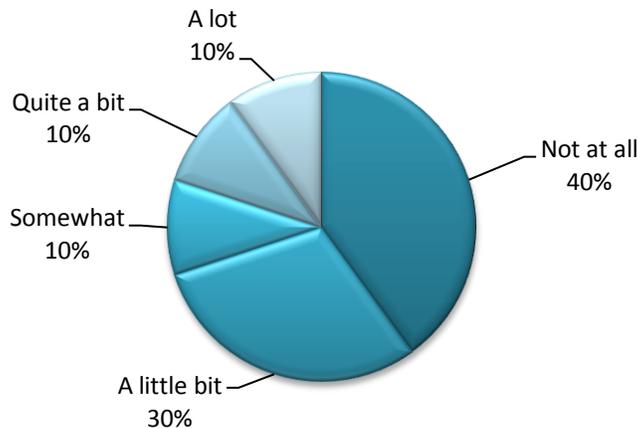
Five women offered additional comments that indicated that they felt they had received supportive assistance from the worker. For example:

“She went above and beyond.”

“[Worker]was a tremendous help.”

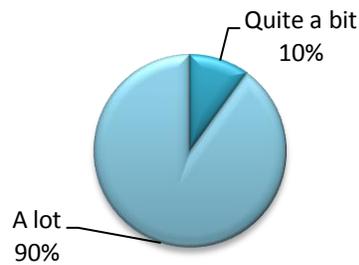
“[Worker] was very friendly and easy to talk to.”

Did you find the process of identifying your primary needs and goals overwhelming? (n=10)



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Did you find that your primary needs and concerns were adequately and effectively addressed? (n=10)



Areas of Needs and Priorities that Women Still Need at the Conclusion of the Pilot

Areas of Need and Priorities that still need to be addressed	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Finding permanent housing ⁴⁹	4	40%
Ongoing emotional support	2	20%
Assistance with daycare support for children	1	10%
Assistance with emotional support/mentoring for teen	1	10%
Food vouchers	1	10%
Education	1	10%
Income supplement (e.g., through working)	1	10%
Vitamins	1	10%

Areas of Frustration in Trying to Meet Needs and Priorities During Blueprint

Areas of Frustration	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Finding adequate permanent housing	2	20%
Dealing with other program restrictions	2	20%
High rents	2	20%
Finding housing to accommodate a disability	1	10%
Finding housing that allows pets	1	10%
Finding furniture	1	10%
Having limited income	1	10%
Having a delay in receiving income assistance	1	10%
Getting help in order to correctly fill out the PWD application	1	10%
Getting adequate mental health support	1	10%

⁴⁹ In one case, a mother needed to find larger accommodations as her children were being returned to her; in two cases, women were in temporary accommodations (seasonal); and the in the last case, a woman was seeking to buy or lease a dwelling.

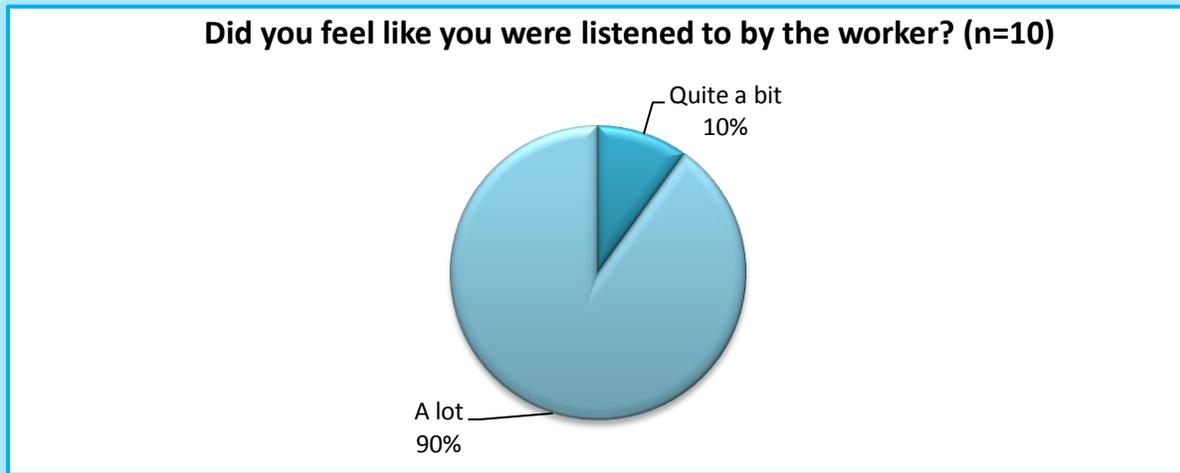
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Women's Experiences Working with the Worker

Meetings and Phone Contact

Women were asked to indicate how many times they had met with and had spoken on the phone with the worker. Women reported meeting with the worker three to 45 times. Women reported talking on the phone with the worker from zero to 20 times.⁵⁰

Interactions with the Worker



100% of women indicated that they felt like they were treated as someone who makes good decisions. 100% of women felt supported and understood by the worker.

Ways in Which the Worker was Most Helpful

Ways in Which the Worker was Helpful	Number (%) of women identifying this area	
Listening; understanding; and providing support	8	80%
Providing information, suggestions, guidance	4	40%
Looking for housing	2	20%
Helping plan a way to meet goals	1	10%
Helping with budgeting	1	10%
Helping with transportation to look at housing	1	10%

⁵⁰ Not all women had a phone.

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Ways in Which the Support Could Have Been Enhanced

Women were asked if there were ways in which the support could have been better for them. One woman commented that she would like the position to be permanent. Another woman commented that she would like the Blueprint worker to be her main worker. One woman also indicated that a list of other support services would be helpful. 90% of women were very satisfied with the support they received (one woman did not respond to the question).

Support from Other Women

Six (60%) of the women had participated in a group during the Blueprint project. Frequency of meetings was either once a week or several times a week. Women who attended a group several times a week were involved in a Bridging program. Five of the six (83%) women indicated that the groups were helpful (one woman did not respond). Women found the groups helpful in the following ways.

- ◆ Felt supported
- ◆ Learned new things
- ◆ Found it helpful to be around women who were in a similar situation

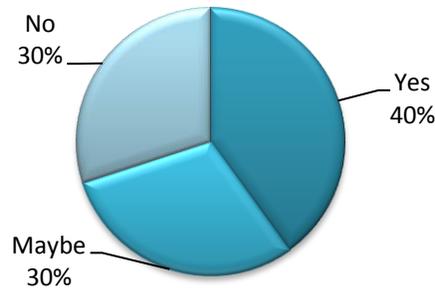
Housing

Women were asked about their living situation at the beginning of the Blueprint project and at the end of the project.

Housing	Number (%) of women in this housing situation	
	Beginning of Blueprint	End of Blueprint
Transition House	5(50%)	1 (10%)
Own home that was not suitable due to disability needs	2 (20%)	
Motel/hotel (seasonal monthly rates)	3(20%)	1 (10%)
Relative's home		1 (10%)
Permanent home		5 (50%)
Permanent home but looking for something larger		2 (20%)

The Blueprint Pilot Project: Early Outcomes

Do you see yourself living in your current home for at least another year? (n=10)



Six (60%) of the women indicated that the Blueprint worker had helped them find their current housing. One (10%) woman indicated that the Blueprint worker had been helping her look for housing but she just happened to find her current housing on her own. Eight of the 10 women (80%) indicated that their housing situation improved as a result of the work that they did with the Blueprint worker.

Women reported paying between \$209.00 (subsidized housing) and \$1,300.00 (median of \$713.00) per month. The highest rent that women indicated that they could afford ranged from \$400 to \$1000 per month (median of \$650).

Perspectives on Housing	Number (%) of women		
	YES	Somewhat	NO
Woman can afford the rent/mortgage (less than 30% of income after taxes)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	7 (70%)
Home feels safe (e.g., location, secure window and doors)	9 (90%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)
There is enough room for everybody	8 (80%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)
Home needs repairs	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (90%)
Home is close to public transportation	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Home is close to community services	8 (80%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)
Home is comfortable	9 (90%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)

Day-to-Day Living

One of the 10 women (10%) reported that they were employed. However all women (100%) were receiving some form of government assistance (e.g., income assistance, CPP, etc.). Monthly income, as reported by 8 women, ranged from \$563.00 to \$2,500.00 per month⁵¹ (median income of \$758.00).

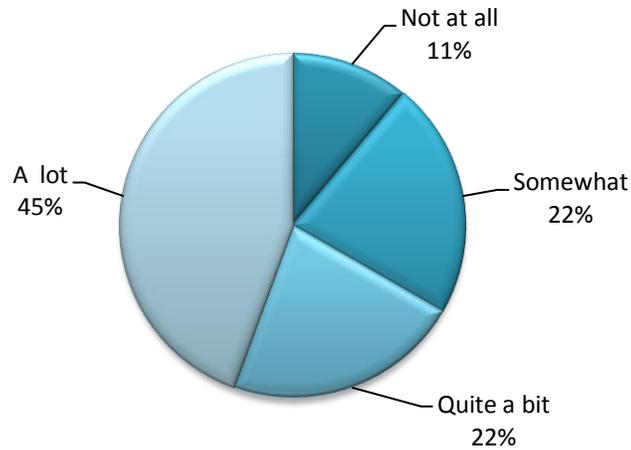
Community Supports

⁵¹ \$2500.00 reflects the inclusion of a monthly child tax credit for multiple children who have special needs.

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Women were asked about various aspects of community supports in their area.

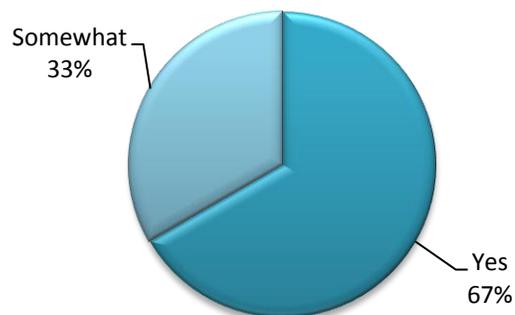
How well do agencies work together in your community? (n=9)



The main way that services could be improved is through better communication. Also women noted that individual services could be improved by:

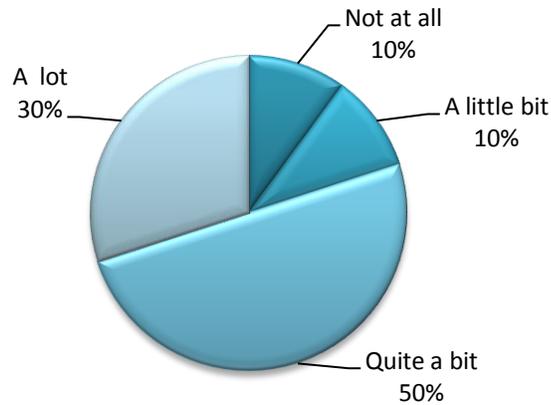
- ◆ Allowing greater flexibility to repeat classes if needed;
- ◆ Receiving faster decisions regarding income assistance;
- ◆ Reducing the number of changes made to the system in short periods of time;
- ◆ Creating more affordable housing;
- ◆ Returning calls to women; and
- ◆ Receiving greater assistance (e.g., bus tickets) for transportation.

Since working with the Blueprint worker, do you know where to go for supports and services? (n=9)

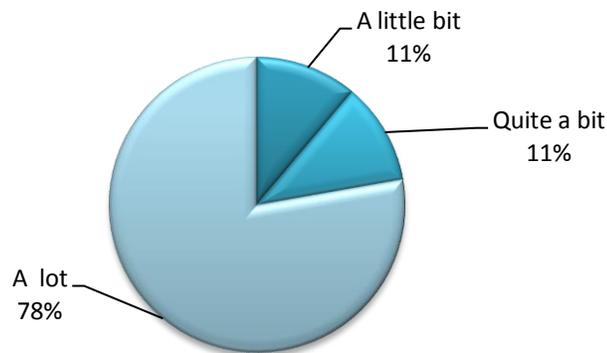


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How confident do you feel that you will be able to get the supports and services you still need? (n=10)



How supported have you felt in the last two weeks? (n=9)



Women were invited to make final comments.

"Great service and friendly, positive worker."

"I think this service is necessary and very helpful."

"[Worker] is an incredible asset and is very supportive, helpful and encouraging. She will be missed."

"I needed to ask for more support when the others fell short. There is [sic] no places to go to that are affordable. If I had had children, I likely would have gone back. The support is good but not the dwellings."

8.4 Community B Post-Blueprint Pilot Interviews with Women

Six women participated in a post-Blueprint interview in order to offer insights on several aspects of their experience of receiving post-transition house services from the Blueprint worker.

Participants: Women ranged from 39-64 years of age (median age of 50). Women had received service from the Blueprint worker from 1 to 6 months (median time of service: 3 months). Three of the women had children. All women were receiving government assistance, primarily disability support. Three women had found permanent housing; two women were in hotels; and one woman was in a home but wanted to find a larger home due to her children's needs.

Past Support from Women-Serving Organizations: All women had received support in the past from women-serving organizations. In particular, all of the women had spent some time in a THP. Half of the women had received support outside of the Community B area. Four of the women indicated that the support had been very good; one woman indicated that the quality of support varied depending on the worker. Some workers were more emotionally available and having to continually retell her story was challenging; and one woman described the support as 'domineering' and not at all helpful.

Collaboration Among Community Agencies: Women were asked their opinions with regards to whether they thought community agencies in their area work well together. Women commented that, for the most part, community agencies do not work well together but that within individual agencies (e.g., Blueprint partner agency), communication is solid between programs. What has helped women deal with varying agencies is having someone from one agency make the link to another agency for them.

"[Blueprint partner agency] is amazing but I find that a lot of these programs don't last very long – just like this one, they come and go, kind of fleeting. They get together with other programs. Funding gets changed."

"Depends on what services you want. Sometimes it's easier and sometimes it's not."

Assistance from the Worker with Accessing Services:

The primary focus for these women was searching for housing. In going through this process, three of the women indicated that they led the process while three women indicated that it was a joint effort between the woman and the worker.⁵² In the case of the joint effort, women appreciated that when they felt like they had run out of options, the Blueprint worker would help generate more ideas or avenues to search for housing.

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Growth in confidence: Through the process, five of the women commented on the gains they made in confidence, motivation and knowledge.⁵³ Examples of comments include:

“Knowing what you’re supposed to do. I was watching her [Blueprint worker] and how she talked and what you’re supposed to say.”

“I feel more worthy because she did take that time to spend with me.”

“I have those tools [housing search tools] if I need to look for a place on my own.”

“Being able to talk to people and find the resources that are available in the community.”

Women were asked about outstanding areas of need at this point in time. Several areas of need were identified.

- ◆ Permanent housing
- ◆ Larger house to accommodate children
- ◆ Support for children
- ◆ Counselling
- ◆ Ongoing medical issues that need to be addressed
- ◆ Ongoing participation in the Bridging program
- ◆ Outreach worker support
- ◆ Employment
- ◆ Assistance for getting vitamins and toiletries

Biggest Challenges with Housing: All women noted that the high rental costs were the biggest challenge in finding housing. Women with children needed adequate space which posed difficulties given limited income. Two additional challenges were finding housing to accommodate disability needs and finding housing that allows pets.

Areas for service enhancements: All of the women were pleased with the support that they received from the Blueprint worker.

Final Comments

“I noticed that with a lot of women, that it [housing support] is a really helpful thing – like a lot of women are on their own for the first time and it’s really scary looking at different places. It’s scary being alone with somebody, especially if you have had different experiences. You don’t want to be alone with a landlord in a place you don’t know.”

⁵³ At the time of the interview, one woman was very distressed about the loss of the relationship with the Blueprint worker. Allowing her the space to talk about this loss became the focus of the conversation.

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"I can't imagine how many women out there could use someone just to stand beside them and ask them [landlords] those questions if you forget because you are nervous or to send you in the right direction or to get you that telephone because you don't have one right now."

"The pilot program.....that they make it long-term. We need it...definitely."

8.5 Partnership Development

Throughout the Blueprint project the Blueprint worker, who was new to the community, looked for opportunities to build partnerships. Overall this proved to be challenging due to having a short six month pilot which started in June of 2012, a time when community agencies tend not to schedule large meetings and staffing is lower due to people taking summer holidays. While there are some existing local networking meetings, these meetings varied in the number of times they met throughout the year (from once a year to once a month). The experience of the Blueprint worker was that the development of real partnerships takes time and when women are in need of services that address basic needs, it is hard to find time in the work to meet with partners in order to look at ways there can be greater collaboration. The work tends to focus on trying to help women to meet their basic needs as quickly as possible.⁵⁴

The Blueprint worker did participate in a poverty forum during the pilot. She also took opportunities to attend relevant events in the community, such as an open house at the First Nations Friendship Centre. Through the ongoing work with women, closer communication occurred with the primary referring agencies and the Blueprint worker. However, they were aware that the position was time-limited.

Given that the role of the Blueprint worker in this community was to help secure housing, efforts were made to forge a partnership with a property management company. While an initial apartment was secured through the company, the woman was evicted due to her ex-partner doing damage to the premises. The Blueprint worker was able to having ongoing communication with the property management company and learned that they wanted to help women. The hope is that this connection will be one that can be called upon in the future. Other beginnings of partnership occurred through working with various non-profit housing organizations.

⁵⁴ If there were time and resources allotted to partnership development, the successful end result should be the creation of easier ways to meet women's needs.

8.6 Housing development

In Community B the average cost (includes rent, utilities, renter's insurance) for a small apartment is \$663.00/month; a two bedroom condo \$1,073.00/month; and a small house \$1,596.00 per month.⁵⁵

Safe and affordable housing is a challenge in the Community B area and while several groups have voiced the need for more affordable housing, it appears that there has been little action taken to address this need. For women fleeing violence, finding permanent, safe, and affordable housing is particularly difficult. There are limited opportunities to access subsidized housing so women must enter the private market. Entering the private market can be challenging due to required finances (e.g., damage deposit, utilities, moving costs etc.) to secure adequate and affordable housing.

As Community B relies heavily on tourism during the summer months, one alternative option for some women has been motels or hotels during the off season when lower monthly rental rates are offered. While this is not ideal as it is not permanent and space is limited, it is a reality for some women. Seeking a room in a motel/hotel and staying there can be challenging due to the limited space in which women (and sometimes children) must live and the temporary nature of this form of housing. The Blueprint worker learned that motels will sometimes advertise one price and then when women go to look at the room, staff at the motel will state that there are no rooms available at the advertised rate. Some motels are unsanitary. For example, one motel has a known bedbug infestation but due to lack of bylaws, it has not been addressed. The one benefit that a stay in a motel/hotel does provide to women is an opportunity to have someone as a reference when they are finally in a place in which they can secure permanent housing.

The Blueprint Worker's Process for Finding Housing

The worker looked at subsidized housing and if the woman was eligible and wanted to apply, an application to specific housing complexes was completed.

The worker also looked through all rental resources (e.g., online advertising sites, newspapers, property management companies, signs around the area) and made a rental list twice a week. This list was available to women.

Some women had specific housing needs (e.g., elevator, size needs, above ground) so attention was given to these needs in the compilation of the listings each week.

A cell phone was used to make calls to landlords rather than the agency phone. The Blueprint worker discovered that landlords were less likely to consider renting to a woman who was fleeing violence.

The Blueprint worker would often attend showings with the woman either as an advocate or as a 'friend' so that women would feel supported and landlords may be more attentive.

In the case where a woman had no reference from previous housing, one strategy was to have women stay in a motel, during low season when rates are lower, in order to get a reference from the motel owner.

⁵⁵ Rent calculations from www.workbc.ca/Jobs/CostOfLivingCalculator.aspx

9. Discussion and Lessons Learned

The Blueprint project aimed to meet five key goals through the creation of a Post-Transition Housing Model for women fleeing violence. Each of these goals, in relation to the evaluation, will be discussed in turn.

Goal One: A Post-Transition Housing Model that recognizes the varied needs women may have as they move on from Transition Housing programs and assists women in meeting those needs (e.g., housing, building a sense of community, legal support, support for child care issues, and support around mental wellness or substance use).

Recognizes Diverse Needs

The Post-Transition Model utilized in the Blueprint project took into account the diverse needs and the ranking of these needs that women have as they move on from a THP. For the most part, the support that women received was women-centred. Women who received women-centred support were more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with services. Women reported getting help with many services through the Blueprint project. In Community A, the Blueprint partner agency offered women support and advocacy in several areas through one of three workers. While there were some high frequency services such as legal advocacy, life skills/parenting, housing support, assistance with income assistance applications and requests, and safety planning, there was also a wide range of other needs for which workers provided support to women. In Community B, the Blueprint worker had a distinct role of housing support but she also provided assistance with other needs such as emotional support, bank issues, income assistance etc. Whereas in Community A, workers provided as many services as possible, in Community B, the Blueprint partner agency offered women assistance in several areas and in this way, the Blueprint worker had the opportunity to dedicate most of her service hours to housing and related issues.

Lesson: Women benefit most from a women-centred approach that strives to support them where they are at by always looking at ways that women can be empowered through the process.

Housing First

Given the difference between the implementation of the Blueprint Model in Community A and B, it allowed for greater insights into women's transition into the community over time. In Community A, while there were a small number of new service recipients, most women had been long-term service recipients of the Blueprint partner agency. Women who were longer-term service recipients were more likely to be in permanent housing as compared to women in Community B. In Community B, the majority of the Blueprint service recipients

Lesson: Permanent safe, affordable and adequate housing is a critical necessity that needs to be met before women can move on in their lives.

The Blueprint Pilot Project: Early Outcomes

The Challenge of Moving

A significant gap in the housing process is moving to a new house. For some women who have possessions, they may not have a social support system to draw upon in order to help them move nor do they often have the financial resources to hire a moving company. In some cases, there may be financial aid from income assistance. In other cases, women must find a local organization who may offer assistance. For example, in one community there is a service offered by an interdenominational group whereby they assist people with moving.

Other Challenges related to moving include:

- If women need to move into a motel, they may need funds to pay for a storage unit for their belongings.
- If women have nothing, they need furniture and a way to get that furniture to their new housing.
- Women may only get one security deposit from income assistance and if they did not get their security deposit returned, this poses a challenge when renting a second place.
- Utility bills in the winter are higher than in summer. If a woman cannot pay the entire bill, her credit rating will be impacted and she may risk not receiving utility services.

were referred directly from a THP. For these women, securing housing was at the top of their list of needs. In the absence of housing, beginning the process of healing is very difficult.

The Blueprint workers made tremendous efforts to secure permanent housing despite the many challenges. In Community A, women were supported in a variety of housing needs (e.g., finding rentals, accessing subsidized housing, landlord-tenant disputes) as they arose. In Community B, the Blueprint worker created a system for finding housing through creating lists of housing openings each week that were derived from several sources. Through this intense focus on housing, some women commented that they learned about the process involved in looking for housing by talking to and observing the Blueprint worker. The Blueprint worker also worked with women to assess their income and create a budget for housing. This budgeting took into account some of the other costs of finding housing (see box to the left). With almost all women receiving government assistance in both communities, paying private market rents was extremely difficult. It was not uncommon that women had few options. For example, one woman lived in a small travel trailer in a farmer's field and other women lived in a motel room during low season. With the exception of women who were fortunate enough to be accepted into a public or subsidized housing program, women did not end up in affordable housing but most found housing that they felt was workable until they could find something more affordable, or in some cases, more acceptable. Having to pay high rents (and utilities in some cases) resulted in women having very little money left over for food and other basic necessities. Unfortunately, neither community had food banks that were open regularly. This posed extra challenges related to food security issues.

Lesson: Women learn new skills and gain confidence through focused mentoring and support (i.e., housing search skills).

Lesson: Women fleeing violence and their children continue to live in situations that result in difficulties securing basic needs (i.e., food, clothing, medical supplies).

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An additional challenge with seeking housing is the experience that some women had in interacting with landlords. They experienced outright rejection of a request to look at apartments when they told the landlord that they are on income assistance and/or they had children. The Blueprint worker played an instrumental role in helping navigate these types of situations with women. Through coaching women on how to frame information to landlords or being present during viewings, it increased the confidence of women seeking housing and the likelihood that housing could be secured for the woman (and sometimes children). Particularly in Community B, where housing was the focus of the Blueprint worker, women reported learning through listening and observing the Blueprint worker in interactions with landlords. This increased their confidence in being able to seek out housing in the future.

Lesson: Women receiving income assistance are more likely to experience discrimination by landlords without someone advocating for them.

So while the Blueprint workers tried various avenues to help women secure housing, due to challenges in the housing market, limited access to public or subsidized housing and the limited financial resources of women, accessing affordable, acceptable, and permanent housing was very difficult. Yet, most women did find some form of temporary (e.g., motel, room in a house, unaffordable apartment) or permanent housing (e.g., public housing, subsidized housing, apartment that was not affordable but women were making it work).

Timely Access to Counselling and Other Services

While housing was the number one focus among women in Community B, access to counselling was the second most cited need. In Community A, where women were more likely to be in permanent housing, counselling was the number one need. There were no shortages of comments that having access to regular counselling was extremely difficult. Shortages were reported by both women and service providers. Waitlists are long and often once a woman does get access to counselling, she is not able to have regular (weekly) appointments due to large caseloads that counsellors have in their practice. Access to more specialized services (e.g., mental health clinics, substance use counselling) was also very difficult. In the interviews conducted with women, there was a theme of loneliness and struggles with self-worth. Women wanted help to deal with the trauma and the impact that this has had on their lives and in some cases, the impact on their children. They longed for connection and support. With few exceptions, women fleeing violence do not have the resources to pay for private counsellors and psychologists and access to free services is very limited.

Lesson: Women need timely access to counselling and other opportunities to develop support networks.

In addition to housing and counselling, several other areas of needs were voiced by women. For example, in both communities transportation proved to be challenging depending on where one lived. For women who relied on public transportation, it was difficult at times to get to places due to infrequent public transportation services coupled with the cost of public transportation which places a

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burden on women who are already trying to live on a very limited income. In the Blueprint project, workers spent a significant amount of time helping women with transportation. For example, when looking at housing, it was not uncommon for the Blueprint worker to drive and support the woman in the process.

When the Blueprint worker could not personally provide a type of support needed by a woman, she would seek out ways in which the need could be met by another agency.

Goal Two: A Post-Transition Housing Model that recognizes that for many women these varied supports are overlapping and dependent on each other (e.g., a woman may need to access Income Assistance in order to obtain market housing).

The Blueprint worker functioned within our B.C. public health, social and legal systems which create many challenges for women fleeing violence. The Blueprint worker looked for ways to smooth the path for women who often experienced frustrations within this uncoordinated and fragmented system. A great deal of advocacy work was undertaken on behalf of women. Consider the following challenges for women that highlight the lack of coordination in our current systems.

- In order to leave a violent situation, a woman needs some financial resources but she cannot access income assistance until after she leaves a violent situation. This results in women having to access a THP if possible or go into homelessness.
- A woman needs to interact with government agencies. She does not have a phone nor does she have access to a computer in order to complete the required forms to apply for assistance.
- If a woman has assets but her abuser has created a situation whereby she has no access to the assets, she must legally seek assistance in order to gain access to her assets. In order to seek legal assistance, she needs finances to hire a lawyer. Without finances, it is difficult to get a lawyer to work on the case. She therefore cannot access the assets.
- Recent government cutbacks to women-serving programs have resulted in barriers to program access. For example, in order to attend a Bridging program which can help women heal and take on new challenges in their life (e.g., employment), they need to get to the program. Recent cutbacks to the transportation budget component of the program has meant that women cannot receive bus tickets to attend every day. Given that many women are on a very limited income, the cost of daily bus tickets is prohibitive.

Lesson: Women experience several barriers due to our uncoordinated and fragmented public systems.

These are but four examples of how our systems are often operate in conflict with one another resulting in increased barriers for women who need and want to move on with their lives.

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Goal Three: A Post-Transition Housing Model that builds on the positive relationships and supports women have as they move on from Transition Housing programs and counters the isolation that often comes with experiences of violence.

Strengthening the web of support for women thereby countering the isolation was a clear need among women. What was clear in the Blueprint project is that many women, due to years of isolation and other forms of abuse, feel alone and disconnected from others. Explicit efforts are required to extend beyond meeting the immediate needs of women transitioning from a THP, to strengthening the social web of support for women. In Community B, there was a Bridging program from which women benefitted both through the learning that occurred and also from the connections that they made with other women. This ten-week program that met several times a week, appeared to offer the intensity of support that helped women feel more connected, understood, and seen. In Community A, there was a support group for senior women prior to the beginning of the Blueprint project that most of the women felt was helpful as they felt understood by others who had been through similar experiences. Overall, incorporating explicit ways to ensure that women have a web of support as they move on with their lives is critical in fostering healing and growth. In addition to formal counselling within a strong therapeutic alliance, there is a need for the creation of more opportunities for women to connect with one another in an environment characterized by warmth and care.

Lesson: Women need the opportunity to connect with one another on an ongoing basis.

Goal Four: A Post-Transition Housing Model that fosters community networks that strategize and act to make women's access to housing and supports after leaving a Transition Housing program easier.

The development of partnerships in order to facilitate women's access to housing and other supports is critically needed in B.C. While there were some networking meetings that occurred during Blueprint, there was not a focus on developing strategies and action plans in the area of housing, specific to women fleeing violence. Currently, agencies are working at full capacity or more than full capacity just to address the immediate needs of women. Time dedicated to partnership development and the creation of strategies and plans have yet to happen. Focused efforts in this area will need to occur in a systematic approach over time.

Lesson: The development of partnerships to facilitate easier access to housing will take time and a systematic approach to engage and nurture these partnerships.

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Goal Five: A Post-Transition Housing Model that is flexible enough to meet the needs of each community and individual woman.

Overall, the Blueprint Model was implemented in a flexible way for women and the community. Each woman's needs were considered unique. These unique needs were then examined in the context of community resources. While not all needs were able to be addressed due to systemic barriers, the Blueprint workers strove to address as many needs as possible. In order to make any post-transition housing model flexible to truly meet the needs of women, ongoing attention is required to ensure that all services and supports provided by workers are women-centred. Training in a women-centred framework will be important for all workers as well as ongoing self-reflection and group discussion by workers as they engage with women. This reflection and discussion will help identify ways in which work may be happening that is well-intentioned but not truly women-centred. Through ongoing dialogue coupled with feedback from women, workers and agencies can better examine practices that can be shifted to better match a women-centred approach. This increase in clarity about the approach to the work can help in educating other agencies about women-centred practices and the values of these practices for women fleeing violence.

Lesson: Ongoing education and reflection is needed in order to ensure services and supports are delivered from a women-centred approach.

10. Conclusions

Overall, through the Blueprint project, it was clear that each woman has their own story and their own unique needs. A responsive Post-Transition Housing Model that takes into account each woman's needs from a women-centred approach is a powerful way to support women to move on in their lives after fleeing violence. A skilled worker, who can help provide a pathway in order for women to be linked to services and feel supported and connected to others, is a critical part of this model. However, the work with individual women is just part of this model. Developing partnerships in order to strengthen supports and services for women will, over time, make the work easier for both service providers and women seeking services.

Based on the evaluation results of this short piloting period in two communities, the Blueprint model, when implemented as a focused and distinct service, shows greater promise as an effective method for supporting women as they transition to the community. Specifically, in Community B, the Blueprint worker focused on meeting the housing needs of women. These focused efforts embedded in a women-centred model yielded meaningful gains for service recipients. While this model was effective in

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Community B, further piloting is needed to accurately assess whether the model in Community B would be effective in other communities.

11. Next Steps

This first pilot project resulted in many lessons learned with regards to the needs of women who are seeking to transition to the community after fleeing violence. In providing supports to women, the systemic barriers that women must face in their efforts to access resources were apparent in both communities. Women have different needs as they flee violence and some of these differences hinge upon where they are in their journey. Two of the most cited needs are housing and counselling/emotional support. In this pilot, housing was a bigger need in Community B as women in this site were just beginning the transition into permanent housing, whereas in Community A, most women were longer-term clients of the agency and had already established themselves in permanent housing. Despite these differences in housing needs, the need for more counselling and emotional support in both communities was clear. What also emerged in this pilot was the finding that most women (among those who had the opportunity) benefitted from the participation in some form of a women's support group. Given the feelings of isolation and loneliness that women experience as they make tremendous efforts to flee violence, providing ways in which women can feel supported and validated is critical to their overall health and well-being.

A recommended next step would be to implement a longer-term pilot in several diverse communities. A longer-term pilot would allow for the development of partnerships (e.g., housing partners and other service providers) in the community that would ultimately strengthen the web of support for women. Based on the findings from this pilot, the role of the Blueprint worker is best refined in order to reflect the needs in different B.C. communities. For example, it appears that the Blueprint worker would be a tremendous asset if she assisted with both housing and some emotional support needs. In smaller communities, the role of the Blueprint worker may include other areas of support depending on what is currently available for women in that particular community.

An ongoing challenge that the Blueprint worker cannot address is the limited availability of free counselling. Waitlists are long and in some smaller communities, services are scarce. While a Blueprint worker can provide some emotional support, caseload size and the time needed to secure housing will pose a challenge to providing the level of support that women need as they make major life changes. In order to address this need for counselling and emotional support in communities, other resources are needed.

Currently, The Woman Abuse Response Program at B.C. Women's Hospital & Health Centre in collaboration with community and health partners is piloting 'Making Connections Support Groups'⁵⁶ in several communities throughout B.C. These groups are designed to be low barrier support groups for

⁵⁶ For more information on this project, please visit:

<http://www.bcwomens.ca/Services/HealthServices/WomanAbuseResponse/Making+Connections.htm>

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women with experiences of violence, substance use and/or mental health concerns. The 16-week groups are co-facilitated by a service provider from the anti-violence sector along with a service provider from the mental health and addictions sector. By bringing together service providers from two sectors, women who have experienced violence have an opportunity to connect with one another in a safe environment, feel validated and reduce their feelings of shame, failure, and isolation. Evaluation findings to date indicate that women, who have participated in the groups, experienced the following benefits:

- Empowerment
- Connection and support with other women and with the service providers
- Reduction in isolation
- Improved understanding about violence and its connection to substance use and mental health
- Reduction in depression and generalized anxiety
- Greater inclination to access mental health and substance use services

It is highly recommended that in future pilots, Blueprint workers from the BCSTH partner with 'Making Connections Support Groups' in order to address the two most pressing needs for women: housing and counselling/emotional support. This partnership could prove to be extremely effective in supporting more women to make the transition to a safer and healthier place.

12. Recommendations

In order to facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive Post-Transition House Model, the following recommendations are put forward.

Working with Women

1. Examine the possibility of private counsellors and psychologists, who have experience in working with trauma, offering one or two free ongoing counselling 'spaces' to women fleeing violence in order that they can access regular support.
2. Increase funding to the Stopping the Violence program in order to allow more women to access counselling services.
3. Expand education and agency development around women-centred approaches.
4. Examine ways in which to increase social support groups and therapeutic groups for women fleeing violence.

Working with the Community

1. Develop and provide funding to implement a systematic approach to strengthen partnerships in and among sectors that support women fleeing violence. This may involve engaging someone who takes on the role of 'partnership development' in order to bring together individuals in various communities/sectors. Given that housing is the most pressing need, this sector would be ideal with which to start.
2. Examine innovative approaches to accessing affordable housing for women fleeing violence that have been successful in other jurisdictions.
3. Continue efforts to help government agencies understand the systemic barriers that women face when fleeing violence. Examine ways to reduce barriers (e.g., limited funds for housing and associated expenses, timing of income assistance eligibility etc.) that are created in the current system.
4. Examine ways to increase access to food for women fleeing violence. For example, are there models of food banks that are unique in various municipalities that allow residents to access healthier food on a regular basis.

Advocacy-Related

1. While it appears that there are some services available for women, wait times and eligibility requirements are less known by providers and most likely policy makers. Consider examining service capacity in some key areas of women's services in order to increase understanding of the service shortages among agencies.
2. Continue to advocate for increased second stage housing in B.C. or some alternative to allow women time to transition from a violent relationship to a safer place.