



BC Society of
Transition Houses



24 HOUR 2010 Census Report

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

In Just One Day

On November 24th, 2010 in Violence Against Women's programs across B.C.
2271 people's lives were directly affected.

1081 adults, youth and children sought support.

651 women, youth and children were sheltered from violence in
Transition House, Safe Home and Second Stage Programs in British Columbia.

320 youth and children were supported in
Children Who Witness Abuse Programs.

880 calls for support were answered.

310 people were educated about violence against women.

Still...

672 women, men, youth and children were
unable to get the support or safe shelter they needed.

But, if these services did not exist, thousands more people would be
without support or information about violence against women.

About the 24 Hour Census

Since 2009, BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) have been conducting a survey of services provided in a 24 hour time period in the Transition House, Second Stage, Safe Home and Children Who Witness Abuse programs that we support across BC. The 24 Hour Census helps us learn about the number of people who accessed VAW services, were unable to access services and an overall picture of the services our Members are delivering.

By surveying over a 24 hour period, we are able to get an unduplicated count of people accessing services – people are unlikely to access services at more than one VAW program during the census period. For example, it is impossible for one person to be sheltered at more than one Transition House at any given time and the same youth or child will not see more than one Children Who Witness Abuse program in one day.

In total, 108 BCSTH Members responded to the 2010 survey. The people in these programs touched the lives of 2271 people, providing support and advocacy to women, youth and children who had experienced violence. Members also provided public education about violence against women to people from all walks of life. Put simply, if these services did not exist, thousands of people would be without support or information about violence against women.

Women, Youth and Children Served

In just one day, BCSTH Member programs in BC provided safe shelter and support to 1081 adults, youth and children. Our members provide professional, compassionate support when women, youth and children need it most. Transition House, Safe Home and Second Stage and Safe programs meet the immediate needs of women, youth and children fleeing violence by providing, shelter, food and other basic necessities while also offering support and advocacy. These programs allow women the time and safety they need to identify the options they have. Women receive nonjudgmental support, as they navigate the complex issues that result from experiences of violence. Advocates within these and Children Who Witness Abuse programs share information with women, youth and children about the dynamics of violence against women, the impacts it can have, and help people who use their services to make plans to keep themselves safer.



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Seeking Safety: Transition Housing Programs

On November 24th, 2010 BCSTH Member Transitional Housing programs in BC sheltered 651 women, youth and children.

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED BY TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM

	TRANSITION HOUSE	SAFE HOMES	SECOND STAGE HOUSE	TOTAL
WOMEN	245	19	100	364
YOUTH & CHILDREN	140	7	140	287
TOTAL	385	26	240	651

Women and their children fleeing violence can access shelter from Transition House, Safe Home and Second Stage programs in BC. Together, these programs are referred to as Transition Housing programs.

Safe Homes

Safe Home and Transition House programs meet the immediate needs of women fleeing violence. Safe Homes are community-based networks of private residences or rental units, usually located in rural and remote areas, and that provide emergency shelter for women fleeing violence for up to 5 days. This short stay gives women time to weight their options which may include moving to a Transition House program in another community.

Transition Houses

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

Second Stage Houses

There are few Second Stage programs in BC. These important programs provide longer-term (3-12 months) secure housing with some support, as women search for permanent housing. Without the option of Second Stage housing some women are left with no housing after their short stay at a Transition House or Safe Home program and may return to an abusive situation when they would have chosen not to if other options were available.

On November 24th, 2010, Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs in BC helped 320 youth and children.



Making Connections: Children Who Witness Abuse Programs

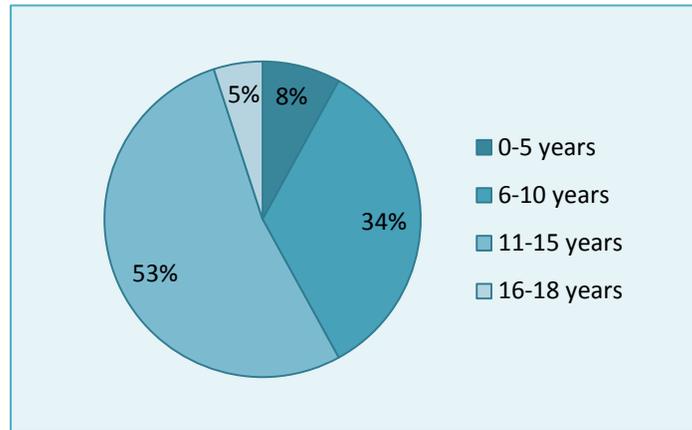


FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN SERVED IN CWWA PROGRAMS BY AGE RANGE IN YEARS

On November 24th, 2010 Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs in BC helped 320 youth and children to understand and cope with violence against their mother, and the effects of this violence on themselves. In addition, CWWA programs supported and provided information to 100 mothers and non-abusive caregivers.

CWWA programs grew out of concern for the children of women who were coming to Transition Housing programs in BC. In 1992, BCSTH obtained funding to research the effects on youth and children exposed to the abuse of their mothers, and to develop a program to support young people. Today there are 81 CWWA programs in BC aimed at helping youth and children between the ages of 3 and 18 who have witnessed violence against their mother.

In 2010, CWWA programs lost all funding for training. Training and professional development are opportunities for workers to learn and support one another as they care for some of the most vulnerable children and youth in BC. Due to the limited resources allocated to these programs, children and youth wanting to talk to someone experience long waiting lists, and most programs cannot offer transportation or snacks for hungry children and youth.

“Many of the children and youth that attend the programs have no funds for transportation. Many of the youth are responsible for their own transportation to group. Even something as simple as not having a bus ticket affects their ability to access service. They show up hungry and now in the winter without proper clothing. However, their desire to reach out for support cancels out being cold and hungry. If we had more funds for art, food, and transportation we could continue to access the most at risk, our youth.” – CWWA Program Member



On November 24th, 2010, BCSTH Members in BC answered 880 calls for service.

Reaching Out: Telephone Support

In addition to providing safe shelter and support in-person for women, youth and children, Transition Housing and Children Who Witness Abuse programs provide telephone support to community members who may not want, or be able to access the programs in-person. Often the first step towards seeking assistance around experiences with violence is on the phone to service providers who are able to answer questions, provide resources and referrals and compassionately listen.

	CWWA	TRANSITION HOUSE	SAFE HOMES	SECOND STAGE	TOTAL
NO. OF CALLS ANSWERED	183	542	62	93	880

A phone call is the only way that many women experiencing violence in BC can access support. Transportation to Violence Against Women’s programs in rural and remote areas is often unavailable given the large geographic area each program covers and lack of public transportation in many regions of the province. While several programs provide transportation for women to get to the program or, alternatively, have outreach workers who can travel to women, plenty of other programs do not have the funding or the resources to provide transportation.

Standing Beside: Advocacy and Support

Aside from providing safe sanctuary, Violence Against Women’s programs also provide support and advocacy for women, youth and children as they deal with the violence they have experienced. Advocates may accompany and help women navigate the medical, criminal justice and government systems as they seek assistance with financial support, legal information and childcare assistance. In fact, the most frequent service BCSTH Member programs reported providing in both the 2009 and 2010 24-hour period was advocacy.

In addition, service providers refer women to other services they may need such as financial literacy, education, job training, mental wellness or substance use supports, childcare and counselling.

“I think that our agency is getting better at removing those barriers for our women to access the services they need. We aren't perfect but we are becoming educated on so many more things because we are having to maneuver through these different systems with our women because there is no where else to refer them.” –

Transition House Program Member

310 people were educated about violence against women by our Members on November 24th, 2010.



Sharing Knowledge: Violence Prevention and Education

Violence Against Women agencies work hard to support women, youth and children who have experienced violence, but our longer-term goal is to prevent violence against women and their children in the first place - education is a big part of prevention. Our members across BC raise awareness about violence against women and the impacts it can have on women, youth and children in their communities. Agencies provide information about services in their communities and how to support friends or family members who may be experiencing violence.

Unmet Needs: Women, Youth and Children Programs Could Not Help

On November 24th, 2010 BCSTH Member programs were unable to meet the need of 672 people due to limited resources, funding and staff. Unfortunately, even with this high number of unmet needs, many of the people who responded to the survey felt it was a slow day compared to their usual numbers:

“The volume of calls and resident appointments was significantly lower than average because it was income assistance cheque day. Cheque day usually results in lower numbers of crisis calls, fewer appointments for accompaniment, etc. because people are busy attending to their finances.” – Transition House Program Member

	CWWA	TRANSITION HOUSE	SAFE HOMES	SECOND STAGE	TOTAL
NO. OF PEOPLE NOT HELPED	537	51	2	82	672

The lack of a comprehensive Violence Against Women Action Plan by the government of BC has resulted in programs being shuffled multiple times between Ministries in recent years, Provincial government staff in those Ministries not being fully trained in violence against women issues, and an overall lack of a cohesive plan to deal with prevention and intervention programming. Currently, the government is taking a piece meal approach to addressing violence against women in BC. Unfortunately, often action is only taken in response to another woman dying. Dedicated and caring staff in Violence Against Women programs do as much as they can with limited resources, long waitlists and limited service hours, but they are just not able to keep up with the demand for their services. It is often the women, youth and children who need support most that loose out.

Waitlists

In this years' survey, anti-violence advocates told us that the limited resources they have means that it is the norm that people who need help can't get it in timely way:

"Wait lists continue to stop women and children from receiving services for at least 6-9 months." - CWWA Program Member

Not Enough Staffing or Training for Staff

There are often not enough staff on hand to effectively support women who are in crisis, who are dealing with multiple systems and who are trying to cope with the effects of violence, including changes in levels of mental wellness and substance use. BCSTH offers training on Promising Practices for supporting women, but Transition Housing programs don't always have funding for staff to attend training, and no amount of training can help when the funds simply aren't there to have enough staff on to support women effectively.

"Frozen funding means difficult choices have to be made to pay for increased labour costs by limiting expenses elsewhere in the program, such as training, when we are increasingly working with women grappling with multiple issues, such as addiction and mental ill health. Increased access to training for our staff team will allow us meet service pressures with best practices in the areas of mental ill health and addiction." – Transition House Program Member



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Lack of Support for Immigrant and Refugee Women

Women who are Immigrants or Refugees or who have no status in Canada are also losing out because of the limited resources of Transition Housing programs:

"Trying to support an immigrant woman, married to a Canadian man who never got around to sponsoring her. He abused her and now she has tried to flee from the abuse but finds herself with no status, no way of staying in Canada, and unable to work. Going back 'home' is not a safe option either. The hopeless reality of this situation put all of us in tears today." – Transition House Program Member

Need for More Safe & Affordable Housing

Finally, there is a lack of affordable and safe housing available to rent or buy in BC, which contributes to violence against women and the high demand for services. With a stay of only 5 or 30 days in a Safe Home or Transition House program, and few Second Stage options available, it is not unusual for women and their children to have to make choice between returning to the abuser or not having a roof over their heads.



Doing More with Less: Challenges Violence Against Women Service Providers Face

In 2010 the continuing economic downturn and the increase in spending costs due to higher food, gas, electricity costs and implementation of the HST hit Transition Housing and Children Who Witness Abuse programs hard. As more women request services, agencies struggle to raise the additional funds they need to meet the increased demands.

Basic program expenses of many programs cannot be delivered on the funds provided by government. Nonprofit agencies must rely on the donations of community members, grants and other sources of income to cover costs of things like clothing, bedding, supplies and, in some programs, even food. In this atmosphere, training, professional development and even staff meetings, are seen as perks. Staff are paid little for the complex and demanding work they do, which can make it difficult to retain quality staff and frustrating for those who do stay in the sector. All of this makes it even more difficult for workers to do their jobs and directly impacts the services women, youth and children receive.

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“We have no funds for relief for staff when they are ill, on vacation or at training. We are also understaffed due to funding shortages. A woman asked for support from us... to attend court tomorrow where her very abusive ex will be present and none of us could offer her this due to lack of staffing.” – Second Stage Program Member

“The cost of inflation is hitting us hard, paired with HST. Our child support worker reviewed her financial statement recently and saw that her program was overspent at the end of the second quarter by 10% and she has not bought anything more than in previous years towards her program. If anything she has been making efforts to buy less due to the crunch. This is strictly due to increased costs. This is true across the board in all budget areas of our program.” – Second Stage Program Member

“As a Safe Home program coordinator it is necessary to have the phone on at all times and never stray very far from the Safe Home location. My wages divided over 24/7 come to less than \$2/hr. The



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availability requirement impedes the accommodation of a second part time job - retaining this position has impoverished my household; I am dependent on the twice monthly food bank to feed my children. The Safe Home program is where my heart is and my girls understand this; It shatters me to weigh my responsibilities towards the Safe Home against my responsibilities to my daughters.” – Safe Home Program Member

As these quotations suggest, agencies are struggling to meet basic needs and are concerned about the future for women and children fleeing violence as well as the wellbeing of their staff. These programs need the support of their community members and the government of BC to ensure that those who are in danger, and the staff who support them, are taken care of.

Violence Against Women Services are Lifelines for Women, Children and Youth

Despite the many challenges Violence Against Women service providers face, successes are happening every day. Women, youth and children who access these services receive life-changing support:

“Staff provided emotional support for a resident who had recently come into the shelter, leaving a 5 year abusive relationship. It was profound to hear her say she had never felt as safe as she did in this moment.” – Transition House Program Member

“I am working with a 65 year old woman who has endured 40 years of physical, psychological and financial abuse which is worse since she retired recently. She has begun the process of getting papers gradually out of the house to a friend and has now visited key community people to let them know what is going on and her plan to leave and found support.” – Safe Home Program Member

“Seeing children start to heal and being able to get back into life....one session today with a young girl who has been able to improve her school performance and concentration since coming to CWWA. Before starting our program she was continually having to leave class as she was breaking into tears and unable to continue with assignments. She is now smiling more and has been able to re-engage in activities that she used to enjoy.” – CWWA Program Member



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And our members were proud to report that community members are pitching in to help. In just one day, programs across BC received over 21 cash donations and 141 in-kind donations ranging from furniture and clothes, to volunteering time to support staff and the women, youth and children in the programs:

"In a 24 hour period, 2 local businesses, 2 community groups and 2 individuals have offered in-kind donations towards families at second stage. We have great community support for our programs here, especially around Christmas time." – Second Stage Program Member

"A local business man offered to donate furniture and bedding from his business as well as volunteer to help plan a reconstruction of a our playground area over the next several months." – Second Stage Program Member

With Violence Against Women programs serving thousands of people each day, and turning away hundreds more, they can use all the support they can get. Contact your local Transition House, Second Stage, Safe Home or Children Who Witness Abuse program to find out how you can support the programs that support women, youth and children who have experienced violence in your community.