BC Women’s Hospital and Health Centre

Woman Abuse Response Program:

Jill Cory  
AlexxaAbi-Jaoude  
Louise Godard

Academic Partners:

Dr. Amy Salmon  
Dr. Marina Morrow
Who We are

• BC Women’s Hospital and Women’s Health Centre – Woman Abuse Response Program
• 14 years in operation
• Mandate: training/education, research, policy, advocacy, network development, partnerships
Our Program Goals

• Understand how health care can contribute to improving women’s safety and health
• Implement programs, policies and training to improve the response to women impacted by abuse
Our Program Activities

- Each year between 1000 – 1200 health care and community service providers attend training
- Work with government agencies to develop resources, policies and research
- Work with community organizations to offer training, consultation and community development
- International conferences
- Provincial Steering Committee
Recent Activities in VCH

• **North Shore Crisis Services Society** – member of Provincial Building Bridges Steering Committee;
• Participating in **Making Connections Support Group Pilot Project**
• **Howe Sound Women’s Centre**
• Participating in **Making Connections Support Group Pilot Project**
Recent Activities in VCH

• Powell River Building Bridges Community Training Forum
  • November 2010, 40 participants
• VCH Concurrent Disorders Network
  November 2010, 22 participants
• Richmond Family Violence Prevention Network
  • November 2010, 50 + participants
Recent Activities in VCH

• Building Bridges Consultation – North Shore
• **Women’s focus groups:** DTES (2), MCFSS, Sechelt, Squamish, Positive Women’s Network
• Medical Rounds, St. Paul’s
• Upcoming training: Eating Disorders Program at St. Paul’s
SHE Framework

- Funded by National Crime Prevention Centre
- Two contrasting Models: Compounding Harms and Safety and Health Enhancement (SHE)
- SHE Evidence Paper
- SHE Toolkit
What is needed to enhance safety for women in the health sector?

• Evidence-based research
• Survivors’ accounts of abuse and their experiences within the health care system
• Promising practices and programs
SHE Goals

• Compounding Harms
  – Distinguish between ineffective or unsafe health care practices that compromise women’s safety

• Safety and Health Enhancement
  – Identify those practices that increase women’s safety and health
Compounding Harms Model

TIER 1: Violence Against Women
TIER 2: Health Impacts
TIER 3: Access to Health Care
TIER 4: Health Practices
TIER 5: Policy and Research
Compounding Harms

- The harms of help
- Understanding power dynamics
- Echoing the dynamics of abuse
- Compounding the impacts of abuse
Harms of Help

• “They need to be more educated on how to talk to people ..., how to make people feel like people instead of feeling like slum... not to be put down, not to be treated like the way they have been treated because in the end 99.9% of the time, if I am going to get treated like that I might as well just go back. It just starts the cycle all over again and each time they need help they want help they are not going to go look for that help because they are going to remember ‘well this is what they did last time’.”
Safety and Health Enhancement (SHE) Model

TIER 1
Violence Against Women

TIER 2
Health Impacts

TIER 3
Access to Health Care

TIER 4
Health Practices

TIER 5
Policy and Research
Safety and Health Enhancement (SHE) Model

• Identify and reduce harms embedded in health care practices and policies
• Create equality-based policies and programs to support women’s safety and health
• Build on promising practices and women’s experiences
The SHE Toolkit

• Develop an Action Plan for improving health care services for women

• Transform health settings by implementing safety and health enhancing measures.
# SHE Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety and Health Enhancing Measures</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Responsible Agency/Person</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(transferred from Risk and Feasibility Worksheet)</td>
<td>(How will it be done?)</td>
<td>(Who will take the lead?)</td>
<td>(When will it be done?)</td>
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Building Bridges:
Exploring the Links Between Woman Abuse, Substance Use and Mental Ill Health
We Started Through Dialogue

• Invited 35 anti-violence partners from across BC for 2 days to talk about what they were observing on the frontlines related to woman abuse, substance use and mental ill health

• Lead to a report of recommendations, development of a provincial Building Bridges Steering Committee

• proposal funded by Vancouver for $45,00.00
Project Methodology

• BC Province-wide workshop/consultation with N=460 service providers representing mental health, substance use and anti-violence sectors from 82 communities
• 15 Focus groups with N=100 women affected by woman abuse, substance use and mental ill health
• 9 focus groups N= 60 with women who stayed in transition houses
• 9 interviews with policy leaders
Some Findings From Building Bridges

- Lack of Integration
- Closed Doors: Excluding women from service
- Jumping Through Hoops: Limited and Exclusionary policies (Length of stay, sobriety, ‘stability’, subjective criteria)
- Mandates and Policies that Ignore Women and their Safety Needs
- Lack of women-only, women-centred services
- Lack of flexibility in service provision
- Not enough outreach
Not getting the right service

• “When I am in there I don’t feel like I am getting the counseling that I need. There is always only one person on staff and there is like a few women in the place and they are always too busy and they don’t have time to hear this, that or the next … and I don’t know to talk about all my stuff cause … you come out of a traumatic thing you are wanting to…you know they told me to come here to deal with any trauma and my counsellor told me to go to AA and when I am done my 12 steps to come back and see her and it is like ‘well I am not going to need you then’.”
Promising Principles

- Violence-Informed Practice and Policy (VIPP)
- Women-Centred Care, Gender-Informed
- Harm Reduction
- Focus on Safety and Health
- Service Integration
Supportive Service Providers

• Provide training/Increase awareness for staff
• Build capacity
• Acceptance, being believed
• Non-judgmental providers
• Service providers need to collaborate to best serve women
Promising Practices

- Comprehensive, ‘one stop’ place
- Wrap around services
- Holistic Services
- Flexibility in Service Provision
- Open Door/Drop-in Services
- Early Intervention
- Range of Services – Crisis to long-term
Promising Practices

- Women’s Support Groups
- Peer Support
- Outreach Services
- Help Navigating the System
- On-going Support/Follow-up
- Mothering Support
- Culturally Safe, Inclusive Services
- Support for Men
MAKING CONNECTIONS
SUPPORT GROUPS

- Co-funded by Canadian Women’s Foundation in partnership with South Peace Community Resource Society &
- Canada Post Foundation Grant
MAKING CONNECTIONS
SUPPORT GROUPS

• Women’s low barrier groups for women impacted by abuse, substance use and/or mental ill health
• 7 communities - 2 pilot rounds – each 12 weeks
• Co-facilitated by anti-violence and mental health workers
• Final curriculum for others to use
• Guide for women impacted by abuse, substance use and/or mental ill health
MAKING CONNECTIONS
SUPPORT GROUPS

- Evaluation will include pre- and post-assessments of empowerment, depression, anxiety and safety/vulnerability for each woman
- Evaluation of group process
- Conducted by Dr. Amy Salmon
Successes!

- High demand for training – always a full house!
- Filling a knowledge and skills gap
- Speaking from evidence that reflects our provincial landscape
- Cross-sector representation
... and Challenges

- Leadership support
- System challenges
- Resource challenges for women are creating moral distress for workers
- Reach male colleagues
- Integrated, gender-informed approaches
Expansion

• We have plenty to do, but always open and available for workshops with groups, clinical teams, networks and communities

• Trying to complete the Building Bridges Framework so that more decision makers have access to emerging evidence
Contact us

• Jill Cory or Alexxa Abi-Jaoude
• Woman Abuse Response Program
• jcory@cw.bc.ca   aajaoude@cw.bc.ca
• 604-875-3717
• Building Bridges website
• http://www.bcwomens.ca/Services/HealthServices/WomanAbuseResponse/Building+Bridges.htm