

Sensitivity Guide



.. SAFE ..
IN COLLINGWOOD

Sex Work Awareness for Everyone

Working together to create a
community that is healthy and
safe for everyone

SAFE in Collingwood is a "Living
in Community" demonstration
project.

www.livingincommunity.ca/

For more information on SAFE:

www.safeincollingwood.ca



Overview of SAFE in Collingwood

SAFE in Collingwood is a neighbourhood-based project that is working to improve the health and safety concerns of sex workers, residents, businesses, and other community members in relation to sex work. The project's goal is to bring together the neighbourhood to identify the issues and challenges and take the appropriate steps to produce practical and tangible results.

The purpose of SAFE is to create a community that is healthier and safer for each and every community member in relation to the issues of sex work and sexual exploitation.

The principles that guide SAFE are:

- Embrace diversity and respect all people;
- Enable the participation of all people;
- Learn and commit to self-growth as a path to change;
- Stand against exploitation and social injustice;
- Create understanding and build community;
- Be open to listening and understanding different perspectives.

Acknowledgements

This Guide was written by Kerry Porth and Matthew Taylor, SAFE Steering Committee Members

Many thanks to the members of the SAFE Inclusivity Committee.

June 2012

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Sensitivity Tips for Reaching Out	
For Individuals	2
For Parents	4
For Business Owners	6
For Community Service Organizations	8
Some Tips on Accessibility	10
Cultural Competence	11
When Should You Ask for Help?	13
How Sex Workers Would Like to Be Treated	14
General Info About Sex Workers	16
Resources	24

What we all want in the communities in which we live and work is to feel safe and healthy.

We access a variety of services that contribute to our health and the well being of our families. We go to our doctors and local health clinics for a range of medical services that both prevent problems or help us when we are sick. We go to the local community centres or neighbourhood houses to access recreational programs and social services. When we need legal advice we know whom to call. To help untangle government bureaucracies we know to go to our MLA or MP office. Our libraries offer access to the Internet, as well as on site help to research information. Our children go to the local schools and when we need to find out how they are doing or what is going on we talk to the teacher or principal and chat with other parents outside the school. When we are afraid or something has happened to us we call our local police station. These are things that contribute to our health, safety and sense of belonging and that we have come to expect in our lives.

But there are people in our community who do not have the opportunity to access these services. There are many reasons. They are afraid. They feel like outsiders. People stare at them or look away making them feel like they don't belong. The hours of service may make it difficult to access services or they don't know where or who to go to see. There are some services, such as doctor's offices, that require they disclose their profession leading to further judgment and stigma.

Community services have a responsibility to ensure their services are accessible and available to everyone within the community, whether an individual is homeless, living in poverty, suffering from addictions or mental health problems or a sex trade worker.

This guide is a first step in understanding some of the issues faced by sex trade workers and how we might better ensure our services are more accessible and our behaviours are respectful and caring. We hope that as you read this guide you will reflect on your service delivery as well as your attitudes and see how you and your organization can make changes that lead to improved access and support. There are sections specifically for parents, businesses as well as community service organizations.

This is a first step. We recommend that further sensitivity training with staff, local parenting and neighbourhood groups is an important next step. Thank you for your interest in building a safe and healthy community for everyone.

For Individuals

When you are ready to reach out personally, here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Your personal comfort and safety must come first. You will be encountering individuals whose lifestyle may be very different from your own and the rules of social engagement you are used to may not be appropriate. The purpose of this guide is to help you be aware of your fears and behaviours and recognize that sex trade workers want and need to be treated like other community members.
2. Keep in mind that many street-level sex workers have many justifiable fears about the public. Many sex workers report that they have been subjected to verbal violence by the public or have been let down in the past by individuals who offered help. It will take time and patience to build trust.
3. If you are approaching a sex worker on the street for the first time, keep the interaction short and pleasant. This may simply mean making eye contact, and smiling and nodding hello as you pass by. If the interaction does not go well, don't take it personally and try again another day.
4. The next time you approach, try stopping to say "hello" and ask the worker how s/he is doing. If you are comfortable, introduce yourself and try having a short conversation.

90% of communication is non-verbal

3

5. Pay attention to your body language and tone of voice. The primary survival skill that sex workers have is their ability to “read” people. Remember that 90% of communication is non-verbal! Please remember the sex trade worker is working. You may be scaring off her clients. Be aware of your surroundings and what her body language is telling you.
6. Keep in mind that many sex workers have experienced violence, including verbal attacks and may distrust you. Maintain a respectful distance and keep your voice calm and friendly.
7. Keep in mind that individuals working in street-level sex work learn many different survival strategies. While some of these are benevolent and non-harmful, some are not. If someone is desperate due to an addiction this may involve scamming people to get money. If this happens, don't take it personally. Know what your boundaries are and stick to them, kindly but firmly.
8. Be mindful of your own agenda ... whatever help you offer must meet the needs of the sex worker, not your own needs. If you promise help, follow through on your promise, as many sex workers have been let down, over and over again, by people who said they would help.
9. Don't assume the sex worker wants out of “the life”. She might be happy where she is right now. Don't assume the sex worker is a drug addict.
10. Many sex workers are parents too. If their presence near your children is disturbing to you, mention it to them; they will usually be agreeable to moving when they understand there is a concern and are approached politely.

For Parents

Many parents, for a variety of reasons, report feeling uncomfortable discussing the issue of sex work with their children. As parents, we have a responsibility to educate our children about the realities of the world around them so that they have the necessary skills and information to help them navigate that world.

Your children are likely to someday see a sex worker standing on a street corner or become aware of sex work through television, movies or music videos and will come to their own conclusions without a context provided by their parents. The media glamorizes many images of sex work, and this can leave children and youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

When out with a parent, younger children up to age seven or eight may see a sex worker and ask questions like, “What’s that woman doing?” or “Why is that woman dressed like that?” With young children the simplest answer is that you don’t know – after all, she might NOT be a sex worker but a young woman on her way to a nightclub! You don’t need to get into a long discussion about sex work because your child isn’t asking that.

Pre-teens are not likely to accept an “I don’t know” answer and are definitely at an age where parents can begin to give them more information.

The average age that a youth is recruited for the purposes of sexual exploitation is 14. It is

The most important thing a parent can do is to talk to their children and talk to them often.

critical that your child have some education about sexual exploitation by the age of 12. Some schools offer prevention education to students and parents should encourage their child’s school to offer this training if they don’t already. Regardless of your personal beliefs

5

about sex work, it is important to teach your children to treat all people with respect no matter what the individual circumstances of their lives.

The most important thing a parent can do is to talk to their children and talk to them often. Parents can help their teens feel comfortable talking to them by not shying away from their questions. It can help if parents are honest with their teen when their questions make them uncomfortable, telling them, "I'm a little shy talking to you about this but I'll do my best and if I don't know something, maybe we can find the answers together."

If you have noticed changes in your child's behaviour and are worried about your child, you can talk to the school counselors at your child's school to get more support and information. Below you will find a list of potential warning signs that your child may be sexually exploited.

Regardless of your personal beliefs about sex work, it is important to teach your children to treat all people with respect no matter what the individual circumstances of their lives.

Attitude/Behaviour

- Withdraws physically and emotionally from home and family
- Experiences extreme mood swings
- Experiences change in appetite (appetite is greater or less than usual)
- Becomes more secretive
- Lies – especially about where they are, or where they have been
- Is very protective of "boyfriend", "girlfriend" or new acquaintances

Physical appearance

- Dresses more provocatively, or "wilder"
- Packs a change of clothes when going out

6

Language

- Adopts slang terms and mannerisms never used before (ruder or cruder streetwise talk)
- Uses disconnected speech (one or two word codes rather than sentences)

Clues around the house

- Unexplained money, e.g. frequently going out to expensive restaurants
- New and expensive clothing or trinkets with explanations that do not add up, e.g. "It's my friend's."
- Phone calls from numbers which do not reveal on a call display unit
- Business cards and receipts for places which are unusual for a young youth to frequent, e.g. nightclubs

For more information, please see the SAFE Website's section on sexual exploitation. Other resources are listed at the back of this Guide.

For Business Owners

Many business owners are disturbed by the presence of sex workers near their establishment. Some businesses hear that their customers are afraid to approach their businesses if there are sex workers working nearby. Some businesses are impacted by the waste (i.e. used condoms, condom wrappers, drug paraphernalia) often associated with street-level sex work. It is important to remember that sex trade workers are frequently blamed for refuse that is left by residents, patrons from local bars and homeless people who live in neighbourhoods throughout Vancouver.

7

You can try the following to address these problems:

1. Approach the sex worker(s) with a smile and explain your concerns to them. Let them know that you care about them but that their presence is having a negative impact on your business and ask them to move to a more appropriate location. It may be useful, ahead of time, to speak to other business owners nearby and select a location that would cause less of a problem. Demanding the sex worker to “get out” or go to another neighbourhood, only moves the problem somewhere else! This also puts the sex trade worker at risk as she may be moving into a neighbourhood where she is unsafe because she does not know her surroundings or anyone in that community.
2. Consider placing a garbage receptacle near your business and let the sex workers know that you'd appreciate it if they could dispose of any waste properly.
3. Keep in mind that many sex workers have experienced violence, including verbal attacks and may be fearful of you. Maintain a respectful distance and keep your voice calm and friendly.
4. Be patient as it may take some time to build enough trust with the sex worker.

8

For Community Service Organizations

It is important to remember that sex workers are a part of our community and have the same right to access services that are available to any other community member. Community services include health care, educational institutions, social services, the library, neighbourhood houses and recreation centres.

It is also important that services are accessible to everyone.

Be patient. It may take some time to build trust.

Accessibility means removing any barriers that might prevent people from accessing services. These barriers may be physical, social, economic, or political. Removing barriers that impact marginalized people requires us all to examine our physical environment and our organizational practices.

Please consider the following questions as a guide to assessing whether your organization and services are accessible for sex workers:

1. Are your staff friendly? Do they say hello and put clients at ease?
2. If the client is confused, do staff go out of their way to assist them?
3. Does staff treat all clients with the same degree of respect?
4. Is privacy respected when clients are being served? For example, if you provide a special service to sex workers, can the sex worker access it without having to identify as a sex worker in a public area? This barrier could be addressed by giving the program a name that doesn't identify it as sex-work specific.

5. Is there a comfortable waiting area that puts people at ease? Is this area monitored by staff to ensure that waiting clients are not harassed by other clients?
6. Are the hours of service suitable to clients? For sex workers, the ability to access a service later in the day or even into the evening may make a big difference.
7. Is there a plan in place to assist clients who may be in distress? Is your staff trained in how to respond to an individual in distress?
8. Does your organization have information on resources available for sex workers?
9. Has staff received sensitivity training on working with sex workers and education about the laws as they relate to sex work?

Some Tips on Accessibility

Perhaps you have decided to make your business/organization more accessible to sex workers. Offering a safe respite from the street, use of your bathroom or telephone can make a huge difference in the life of a sex worker. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. You will need to set very clear boundaries about how and when sex workers are permitted to enter your business/organization including what you will do if the sex worker is behaving in an inappropriate manner. For sex workers in active addiction, setting a boundary that they must be “well” when on your premises is a good idea. “Well” in this context means that they are not so intoxicated that their behaviour has become unpredictable and/or problematic.
2. Bathroom use can be problematic as addicts may be using the bathroom to use drugs. It's perfectly acceptable to place a time limit on bathroom use. Don't assume, however, that because the client is a sex worker that they must be a drug addict.
3. If you permit a sex worker to use your business phone, you will likely need to place a time restriction.
4. Sex workers face a great deal of stigma and isolation due to negative perceptions of who they are and are generally quite sensitive to non-verbal communication. If they are accessing your business/organization because you've indicated that it is okay for them to do so, you will need to ensure that all staff members are on board with your policy and will treat the sex worker with dignity and respect.

Some basic tips:

- Smile warmly and acknowledge the sex worker;
- If appropriate, ask if s/he needs any help. Be careful that your attention doesn't make her/him feel that s/he is being watched;
- Regardless of his/her appearance, try not to give her/him the "once over", avoid raising your eyebrows or indicating disapproval.

If you are uncomfortable doing any of the above, or if you have made attempts to speak with a sex worker about behaviour you find problematic and you are not happy with the outcome of that interaction, there are a number of resources listed at the back of this guide that may be able to assist you. See "Organizations That Provide Support and Resources for Sex Workers".

Cultural Competence

An important component of sensitivity training is cultural competence. Cultural competence is the ability to interact comfortably and communicate effectively with people from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and linguistic traditions. It also implies the willingness to learn about other cultures. It is an ongoing process of learning. Sex workers are diverse in their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Residents, businesses and service providers reflect the same diversity.

The individuals in an organization can begin to gain cultural competence through formal training. But it takes consistent individual practice and the support of a culturally competent organization to continue to develop and maintain individual cultural competence.

Just like a culturally competent individual, a culturally competent organization grows over time. As an organization matures in the area of cultural competence, it will introduce and

12

fully develop the following elements:

- Openness and respect for diverse staff and clients
- Signs and written materials in the languages of its clients
- A culturally diverse staff that ideally reflects its client mix
- Cultural competence orientation and training for all staff/volunteers at all levels
- Services and programs that address the different needs of different client populations
- Access to professional interpreters in circumstances where communication is critical

How can you get started in improving your organizational cultural competence? A good way to get started is to answer the following questions about your organization.

1. Describe the culturally diverse populations served by your organization
2. Describe service delivery barriers you have encountered in serving culturally diverse populations in an effective manner
3. Discuss any challenges you have had working with:
 - Staff of culturally diverse backgrounds
 - Clients/customers of culturally diverse backgrounds
4. Describe any cross-cultural success stories and why they occurred
5. Describe policies and procedures you have developed and strategies and resources you have used in serving culturally diverse populations in an effective manner

Aboriginal women: Developing a better understanding

It is also important to learn about the historic experiences of Aboriginal peoples to better understand the severe social impacts on Aboriginal communities and families and why so many Aboriginal women are engaged in street-level, survival sex work.

Much of the cause is due to the impacts of colonization and residential schools. The imposition of Western values and laws on Aboriginal peoples has had a significantly detrimental impact. From a First Nations perspective, colonization has resulted in the loss of land, resources, self-government, culture, language, health care, education, and traditional economies. Residential schools were a direct effort by the Canadian government to assimilate Aboriginal peoples resulting in a severe breakdown of families and a host of personal health problems including addiction, domestic violence, poverty and suicide. The impacts have affected multiple generations.

When Should You Ask For Help?

Some behaviour associated with drug use can be disturbing to witness. Most often, individuals appear to be partially conscious; they may be either sitting and appearing to be falling asleep or they may be standing, bent over from the waist, for a long period of time. This is usually the result of using a narcotic or an opiate drug such as heroin and is not cause for concern unless the individual hasn't moved for a long period of time.

If this is the case, approach the person slowly and, in a loud voice, ask if they are okay. If there is no response, continue to approach and you may need to touch the person (gently) on the arm or shoulder. If there is still no response but the individual appears to be breathing properly, they may simply be sleeping deeply. If their breathing is irregular and shallow, and

they do not respond to repeated attempts to rouse them, call 911. Uncoordinated and involuntary body movement characterizes another typical behaviour you may witness. Their arms may be flailing about wildly, their jaw may be working as if they were chewing vigorously and their eyes may appear unfocussed. This is usually due to the overuse of stimulant drugs, most commonly crack cocaine or crystal methamphetamine, in combination with a lack of sleep. Individuals in this state are very difficult to communicate with as they lack the ability to focus on what you are saying. They may be unaware of their surroundings and their behaviour. This behaviour usually does NOT indicate an overdose. Please note also that these behaviours may have nothing to do with drug use. This person may be diabetic or having a seizure etc.

You may wish to offer water or Gatorade to these individuals as they frequently become dehydrated while in this state. The act of drinking water may calm their symptoms long enough for you to suggest they move to a safer location. Gatorade may help to restore depleted electrolytes. Caution should be used in approaching individuals in this state as, depending upon the drug they have consumed; they may be unpredictable and possibly violent.

How Sex Workers Would Like to be Treated

The following comments were made by street-level sex workers from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver as part of a project they were involved in:

For Medical Professionals

- *Don't minimize my issues. Listen to me — I am the expert in my own experience and know my own body.*
- *Please educate yourself about why people may have anxiety issues or issues*

around body image, teeth, scars, scabs, eating disorders, shame based on our upbringing.

- *I may have severe anxiety or even a panic attack. Accept that I may need to bring a friend or advocate for support or as a witness.*
- *Inform me of my rights including the right to read my own file. I have the right to anonymity and confidentiality while I stay in the hospital — I may have an abusive partner.*
- *Addiction issues may affect what medications I can or can't have but please trust that I will do my best to do the right thing.*

For the Public

- *Treat me as an equal.*
- *Walk a day in my shoes — understand that it's not so easy to "just get a job" or change my lifestyle overnight. Understand the difficulties of living in poverty and/or on welfare. There are many barriers to consider such as change in routine, structure, adapting to someone else's hours, not making cash etc.*
- *I might feel shame, have low self-esteem and not feel strong or confident. I may not be socialized to the straight world.*
- *Don't call us "those people" or judge me for living in the Downtown Eastside. Have faith in the people that live in my community, that we are a community.*
- *Don't call me "the girl with the scabs". Don't talk down to me or assume I'm stupid. Don't patronize me with comments like "I guess you're telling the truth". Don't assume you know me based on my past, where I live, how I dress etc.*

General Information about Sex Workers

1. Why do sex workers do this work?

This is the most frequently asked question. Sex workers are male, female and transgender and come from all kinds of backgrounds and cultures and most sex workers would very simply reply that they do this work to make a living. Just like other professions, there are various motivations for choosing this one. Some like the flexible schedule, some enjoy meeting many people from different walks of life, and some are comfortable with sexuality, nudity, listening and giving moral support.



Street-based, or *survival* sex workers may find themselves doing sex work as a last resort in order to meet their daily survival needs. These individuals are often faced with a host of systemic issues such as poverty, addiction, homelessness, and mental health issues and due to the fact that their work is much more visible, they are far more likely to face criminal sanctions. Aboriginal women are over-represented in survival sex work due to systemic racism and the impacts of colonization and residential schools. Sadly, many of these individuals remain trapped in this lifestyle due to a lack of appropriate services and supports.

While some sex workers change occupations within the sex industry, some keep the same job, and others leave for new horizons. It is possible to practice sex work for a few weeks, a few months or many years, similar to other occupations. There is no standard path.

Why choose to do sex work? While sex workers are often asked this question, gas pump attendants, office clerks, doctors and lawyers are seldom asked to explain

their motivations behind their profession. Being conscious of and challenging this double standard contributes to the social integration of sex workers and, as a result, to the fight against their marginalization.

2. Is prostitution legal in Canada?

Prostitution, the exchange of sex for money or other valuable considerations, is legal in Canada. However, the *Criminal Code of Canada* deems illegal some acts associated with prostitution that allow it to take place. Sex workers, right across Canada, have recognized for years that the set of laws intended to control prostitution, has made it very difficult for sex workers to work safely. To that end, a group of sex workers in Ontario recently launched a court case challenging the constitutionality of these laws. The original trial resulted in a clear victory for sex workers as Justice Susan Himel struck down three of the provisions related to prostitution. The Government of Canada immediately launched an appeal which was heard at the Supreme Court of Ontario in June 2011 and the final decision on the appeal was announced in late March 2012.

The current laws remain in a bit of a state of flux but are summarized below:
Section 210 (Currently in the Appeal Process) This section referred to “keeping a common bawdy house” – a bawdy house is any location where prostitution *regularly* occurs, including private dwellings. It is well documented that working at an indoor location is much safer for sex workers than working on the street. This activity is now legal however, the court imposed a 12 month stay on this decision to allow the Government of Canada time to draft a new law or file an appeal.

Section 212 (Under Appeal). Section 212, subsection J stated that it was illegal for anyone to live off the avails of prostitution. This law was enacted to protect sex workers from predatory pimps but unfortunately applied to professional relationships related to sex work that are established for security purposes (such as referring a client to a sex worker or hiring a bodyguard), for economic reasons

(such as hiring someone to answer the phone or place ads for a sex worker or sex work organization), for transportation of a sex worker or for ensuring that an initial agreement with a client is respected (for example, with an employer, a manager, a driver or a receptionist). This criminalization effectively lent a judicial aspect to sex workers' personal relationships because police officers and other members of the judicial system can assume that roommates, intimate partners and family members financially benefit from prostitution. The Supreme Court of Ontario added the phrase "in circumstances of exploitation" to add clarity to this law and ensure that sex workers can hire individuals to improve their safety as well as financially supporting family members or loved ones.

Section 213 (Upheld). The Code also prohibits "communication for the purpose of engaging in prostitution", which prevents a clear and direct negotiation between sex workers and their clients about the services offered.

Three of the five judges in the appeal made the decision to uphold this law that primarily applies to street-based sex workers. Currently clients and sex workers feel this is extremely dangerous as they are forced to work in clandestine, remote, and dark locations and must rush negotiations to avoid police enforcement.

For more information on the impact of legislation on sex workers, and to stay abreast of the changes to prostitution law, please see:

www.pivotlegal.org/pivot-points/blog/ontario-sex-work-judgement-in-489-words

To see the Canadian Criminal Code provisions relating to sex work, please see: laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/ and click on "Criminal Code" under "Frequently Accessed Acts". The specific sections are CC210 to 213. Please note that recent changes may not be reflected on the website immediately.

3. Are sex workers under the control of pimps?

According to stereotypes, a pimp is a man who exploits a sex worker and controls their work and income. When the question is posed "are sex workers under the control of pimps?" there is no simple yes or no answer. There are many realities; some sex workers have never experienced exploitation while others have been in extremely violent situations where they are under the complete control of a 'pimp'. Historically, in media we hear mostly of these two examples, and while they are common, there are many whose experience falls somewhere in between.

Control can potentially entail all aspects of a person's life: what to eat, what to wear, where to live, who to see, when and where to work and the right to ensure safe sex and negotiate the use of a condom. These are but a few examples and methods that can involve emotional, psychological, physical, and financial control.

Sex workers who have been exploited often find it difficult to leave the sex trade even after they have broken free from the pimp due to lack of options and social supports.

Males, females and transgendered sex workers experience exploitation. Male sex workers and escorts may work in massage parlours/agencies and have managers and/or pimps (men or women) that organize and control some or all parts of the negotiation and take a percentage but this situation tends to be less typical than with female sex workers. Survival male sex workers (MSW) and hustlers (another term used for male sex workers) on the street tend to work independently and in isolation so the role of a pimp can often differ from the traditional ways that pimps organize and control a sex worker. For example, If a MSW has issues with addiction and is in debt to a drug dealer, the dealer may 'pimp him out' to other clients to

recoup the debt. This relationship may be ongoing as the MSW becomes more dependant on the dealer to supply a growing habit/addiction.

However, many sex workers work independently. Some choose to associate with colleagues to share their resources, such as a workplace. Some prefer to work for various employers, particularly women or men who own escort agencies or massage parlours. Some associate with partners to ensure that they get help and protection, in case of need. The stereotypical image of the pimp does not always correspond with the different contexts for sex work.

4. Do sex workers discuss their work with their friends and family?

Some sex workers openly discuss their work. Some choose to talk about it with only a few trustworthy people, and some prefer to keep silent about it. The prejudice and stigmatization from society, and from friends and family, have an influence on the sex worker's decision whether or not to "come out" as a sex worker.

People hold all kinds of preconceived notions about sex work milieus and people who perform this work. Easy associations are made with drug use, sexual assault and organized crime, to name a few. This often reflects the ignorance surrounding the diverse realities of sex work and it reinforces sex workers' victimization and silence.

This makes it difficult for sex workers to assert themselves as sex workers, or to speak openly about what there is to like about this work without, being judged. Keeping silent for fear of judgement has a deep impact on one's health and well-being, especially in a society that values work and employment. Each worker chooses to reveal herself or not depending on her needs, her friends' and family's open-mindedness and her social environment.

The creation of a trusting relationship, which allows sex workers to feel free to speak openly, can only be achieved with an open attitude, respect and an absence of judgement on the part of those around him/her.

5. Have most sex workers been sexually abused/assaulted during their childhood?

One out of three women will be sexually abused or assaulted in her lifetime. It is generally difficult for any woman to lodge a complaint against her assailant. Like many women, some sex workers have been the victims of a sexual assault during childhood but there are other sex workers who have never been sexually assaulted. The majority of sexual assault victims do not work in the sex industry. Whether there is payment or not, any sex act performed without consent is an act of violence.

When it comes to abuse and sexual assault, sex workers, like other people, should be protected by police services, receive proper hospital care and benefit from adequate psychosocial services without fear of being judged. They should receive the appropriate help without being afraid of being denounced, harassed, despised, attacked or criminalized again.

6. Do sex workers use drugs?

For many, sex work and drugs go hand in hand, so there is an assumption that all sex workers use drugs. Because of the considerable stigmatization, many believe it is difficult or even impossible to perform sex work without using drugs. The reality, however, is more complex. Some sex workers use alcohol or drugs recreationally, on an occasional or a regular basis, but some never use them at all. Those who use drugs while working or overuse them become much more vulnerable to abuse and risk having great difficulty setting their limits in regards to acts, prices and the duration of services they offer. Drug addiction can put their health and security at

risk. These workers may end up with a client they barely trust or accept one who refuses to wear a condom. Clients can take advantage of this situation.

Without over-generalizing about the association between sex work and drugs, it is important to recognize that drug use can impact some sex workers' ability to negotiate safer sex and increase their vulnerability in ways that compromise their security as well as their health.

7. What impact does sex work have on the health and well-being of sex workers?

Whether criminalized or not, sex work is often not recognized as work. Sex workers do not have access to the same fringe benefits that other workers enjoy. Their concerns about health and safety in the workplace, however, are similar.

Even if they take care of their health, their security and their dignity, sex workers cannot always escape work-related stress. Prejudice, oppression, shaming and harassment from police officers or others are heavy burdens they carry in their daily lives. Hence, the stigmatization and the social and judicial context operate as determinants of sex workers' health: they define options, influence choices and create the physical and social environment in which sex workers live. This marginalized situation interacts with other known health determinants, such as income inequality, lifestyle habits, family situation and age.

When interacting with or helping sex workers, it is important to take into consideration the impact of stigma and social exclusion on sex workers' lives.

8. What do sex workers need?

Women, transgender, and men working in the sex industry need to have better control over their working conditions. They need to gain or improve the personal skills and abilities that allow them to live and work in a healthy way with dignity.

Individuals who do sex work need:

- To be recognized as full citizens.
- To be listened to without being judged.
- To be taken seriously.
- To be integrated into the community without fear of being ostracized.
- To have their human rights recognized and respected.
- To have the abuse and coercion they are subjected to reported to the police or another authority as a violation of their integrity.
- Access to public services without discrimination.
- Access to work-related social and judicial services.
- To have the laws that currently govern their work reformed in a manner consistent with their human rights and to have a voice in law reform.

To fulfill these needs it is, above all, necessary to respect the rights of the individuals who perform sex work. We can support their health and well-being by improving their integration into their communities; by improving their access to judicial, community, education and health services; and by facilitating the appearance of non-stigmatizing social representations of sex workers.



Resources for Youth and Parents

KIDS Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
Anonymous and completely confidential information and support for children and youth. Open 24 hrs/day, 7 days/week.

Children of the Street Society 604.777.7510
Prevention education strategies, public awareness initiatives, and family.
www.childrenofthestreet.com/

ONYX 604-708-2647
Provides support services to youth 18 and under who are or have been sexually exploited.
onyx@plea.bc.ca

Predator Watch 604-777-7510
An initiative of Children of the Street Society with the goal of stopping predators from soliciting sex from children and youth online.

Safe Online Outreach Society (SOLOS)
Information and tools for youth, parents and educators to help keep children and youth safe online.
www.safeonlineoutreach.com/

Sexual Exploitation Toolkit (Justice Institute of BC) 604 708-2647
Vancouver Community Action Team (VCAT)
Developing strategies to prevent sexual exploitation and support youth.

Resources for Residents and Businesses

If you have a non-emergency concern, you can call:
Collingwood Community Policing Centre 604-717-2935

Vancouver 3-1-1 3-1-1
For info and requests on city services such as mattress and garbage removal.

Needle Pickup Hotline 604-657-6561

Organizations that provide support and resources for sex workers

SAFE in Collingwood Outreach Team

778-708-3227

PACE Society

604-872-7651

By, with and for sex workers, PACE Society promotes safer working conditions by reducing harm and isolation through support and education. PACE believes that sex workers are valuable members of the community and are entitled to the same rights as all other human beings.

HUSTLE

604-684-3032

Outreach: 778-868-1776

HUSTLE supports male, transgendered and youth in Vancouver by offering outreach and support programming in the community.

WISH Drop-In Centre Society

604-669-9474

WISH provides services to women working in survival sex work. The drop-in centre is the heart of the WISH programs—a safe place off the street where women can find acceptance, hot meals, support services and more. WISH also operates the MAP (Mobile Access Project) and the Bad Date Reporting service.

MAP (Mobile Access Project)

604-720-5686

MAP is operated by the WISH Drop-In Centre Society in partnership with PACE Society. It provides overnight outreach to sex workers (support, condoms, needle exchange, basic first aid and emergency services) when no other services are available.

Bad Date Reporting

604-669-9474

Sex workers can make reports about violent and predatory individuals to alert other sex workers in Metro Vancouver. Bad date reports are sent to WISH, which then compiles them and disseminates them through a large network of service providers that are in contact with women working in the sex industry.

Boys R Us

604-633-4200

Boys R Us is a referral and outreach program that provides a safe, supportive drop-in centre for men and transgendered participants who work or used to work in the sex industry. This site, connected to AIDS Vancouver requires a password.

Transgender Health Program

604-734-1514

or 1-866-999-1514 (BC only)

This peer supported weekly drop-in discussion group is open to those who are exploring their own gender issues and is located at Three Bridges and funded by Vancouver Coastal Health.

Pivot Legal Society - Legal Assistance

604-331-1407

Every Monday 1pm to 4pm at Atira Women's Resource Society, 101 East Cordova
For women only. Appointment required.

Tuesdays 1pm to 3pm at Lifeskills Centre, 412 East Cordova. First come, first serve.
Men and women welcome.

Jane Doe Legal Network

If you are a woman who has experienced violence and need legal help our Jane Doe Legal Network may be able to provide you with confidential legal advice.

Email: Darcie@pivotlegal.org for more information.

OTHER RESOURCES**Collingwood Business Improvement Association**

604-639-4403

Supports healthy business development and community events in Collingwood

Collingwood Neighbourhood House

604-435-0323

Social and recreational activities for all residents, welcoming and inclusive to everyone.

Evergreen Community Health Centre

604-872-2511

Public healthcare services like primary care, addictions, mental health, parenting groups, and home care.

Needle Pick-up Hotline

604-657-6561

City Mattress Removal

604-326-4719

The SAFE in Collingwood website has a full listing of resources:
www.safeincollingwood.ca