

REPORT
Evaluating Female Client Satisfaction
with Violence Prevention Services in
Rural and Urban
Newfoundland and Labrador

Submitted to
VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE
WOMEN'S POLICY OFFICE
August 29, 2012

Property of the Government of
Newfoundland and Labrador



JANE HELLEUR & ASSOCIATES INC.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) is a multi-departmental, government-community partnership designed to find long-term solutions to violence against those most at risk in society. The Initiative is led by the Women's Policy Office and involves 11 governmental departments and agencies and over 30 community partners including a Community Advisory Committee and ten Regional Coordinating Committees Against Violence.

Over the last six years, the Provincial Government committed to increasing awareness and attitudinal change, increasing community participation and improving legislation, policy, programs and services for violence prevention. These actions have supported women and children leaving abusive situations, Aboriginal women and children, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and those marginalized due to race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or economic status. The initiative also included improved research, leadership and accountability mechanisms to ensure that there were clear roles and responsibilities established. These actions have resulted in better collaboration among partners who are working towards the common goal.

Phase 1 of the VPI Action Plan is currently being evaluated. As one component of the evaluation, focus groups were held with female victims of violence who have accessed violence prevention services within the province. In August 2012, focus groups were held in both urban and rural areas of the province as illustrated below:

Date	Location	# Recruited	# Participated
August 16, 2012	St. John's - Holiday Inn	8	7
August 16, 2012	St. John's - Holiday Inn	8	8
August 22, 2012	Grand Falls/Windsor - Advanced Education and Skills	7	5
August 22, 2012	Marystown - Marystown Hotel	8	7
Totals		31	28

The objectives of the focus groups were to:

- Seek input from female clients of violence prevention services in the province on the accessibility of those services;
- Gather feedback from clients to help evaluate the current Violence Prevention Initiative and its action plan, *Taking Action Against Violence 2006 – 2012*; and



- Seek input to inform the development of a new draft action plan.

The women who participated in each of the four focus groups were very engaged in the process and very forthcoming in sharing their experiences and suggestions for improvement.

While there were some differences among women in the relative importance of some topics discussed, there were significant themes that emerged as follows.

A diverse range of services are accessed by female victims of violence.

The services accessed are numerous, but more numerous in the St. John's area, a possible indication of the population density and the diverse range of services that are consequently feasible. For the focus group participants, to escape a violent situation, police are normally the first service accessed. This is followed by referral or placement in a women's shelter such as the Iris Kirby House (St. John's) or the Grace Sparkes House (Marystown). Staff within these shelters and within women's centres work as system navigators and coaches to help women access the services they need.

As expected, other service access include a range of community-based professionals, such as social workers, public health and community nurses. Women also access Income Support, Victim Services, housing, Legal Aid, Child, Youth and Family Services and a host of others.

For the most part, women were highly complimentary of the services and support received at women's centres.

Navigating the justice system and access to affordable, safe housing after leaving shelters were named as the most significant barriers encountered.

Women felt strongly the justice system continues to re-victimize women who have experienced violence. This occurs through cycles of postponed court dates that drain emotional energy and sentencing patterns that are too lenient for the perpetrators. Some women also noted that judges are too ready to provide victimizers with access to their children who are often emotionally victimized by the violence their mothers have experienced.



Regardless of where the women resided, access to safe, affordable housing after leaving a women's shelter was identified as a significant barrier. It was noted that housing is becoming increasingly inaccessible given economic growth that drives higher rents. Affordable housing was noted to often be available only in the worst and most dangerous neighbourhoods. Many of the income support concerns expressed were derived from housing costs.

The range of Income Support services could potentially be expanded.

Many of the focus group participants had either received Income Support or were currently receiving Income Support. However, for women who are in low wage jobs, the "transitional" funds required to re-establish themselves in new housing arrangements is a tremendous hurdle to overcome. These transitional costs include debts such as unpaid utility bills from the former household. It was noted that women could benefit from accessing a government supported loan to overcome such transitional challenges.

Awareness of violence prevention and intervention services should be increased.

It was remarkable that a number of women in the focus groups noted that if they knew women's shelters and the range of other services that are available, they would have left their violent situation earlier. Many women had negative, preconceived notions about what a shelter would be like (i.e., the notion of barrack-like bunks) that turned out to be incorrect. Focus group participants also spoke passionately about the need to get the word out about services available and the behaviours that constitute violence. They believe prevention efforts must begin when children are young, that bullying must be tackled, and that women need to know what number to dial to escape a violent situation.

Focus group participants were unanimous in their expression of appreciation in being asked their opinions and would like more opportunities to attend group meetings with women who have been victims of violence.

This sentiment was spontaneously made and readily endorsed by other focus group participants as the consultant team were wrapping up the sessions. They reported having benefited from learning about the experiences of other women and the



opportunity to debrief by being able to talk about their own experiences. More opportunities to connect with other women would be welcomed.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) is a multi-departmental, government-community partnership designed to find long-term solutions to violence against those most at risk in society. The Initiative is led by the Women's Policy Office and involves 11 governmental departments and agencies and over 30 community partners including a Community Advisory Committee and ten Regional Coordinating Committees Against Violence.

In the 2011 *Speech from the Throne*, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador renewed its commitment to reducing violence against women and other vulnerable populations in the province in partnership with community and other stakeholders through the VPI. Phase 1 of the VPI spanned the years 2006 to 2012 and focused in large part on implementing commitments for the Action Plan, *Taking Action Against Violence 2006-2012*.

Over the last six years, the Provincial Government committed to increasing awareness and attitudinal change, increasing community participation and improving legislation, policy, programs and services for violence prevention. These actions have supported women and children leaving abusive situations, Aboriginal women and children, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and those marginalized due to race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or economic status. The initiative also included improved research, leadership and accountability mechanisms to ensure that there were clear roles and responsibilities established. These actions have resulted in better collaboration among partners who are working towards the common goal

Phase 1 of the VPI Action Plan is currently being evaluated. As one component of a comprehensive evaluation plan, focus groups were held with female victims of violence who currently access of who have accessed violence prevention services within the province.

The objectives of the focus groups were to:

- Seek input from female clients of violence prevention services in the province on the accessibility of those services;
- Gather feedback from clients to help evaluate the current Violence Prevention Initiative and its action plan, *Taking Action Against Violence 2006 – 2012*; and
- Seek input to inform the development of a new draft action plan.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Focus Group Sites and Participant Recruitment

Originally, two focus groups were anticipated: one focus group was anticipated for an urban location and another in a rural location and with each focus group consisting of 15 participants. However, based upon the consultants' recommendations, it was agreed to conduct two additional focus groups and reduce the number of participants per group. Participants, particularly those that have high personal vulnerability and who are asked to speak about deeply personal information are more inclined to share their views in a smaller group setting. Therefore, a decision was made to hold two separate focus groups in the urban location of St. John's and two other focus groups in the more rural locations of Grand Falls/Windsor and Marystown. A maximum of eight participants were recruited for each focus group.

Given the confidentiality surrounding this topic area, it was not appropriate for the consultants to make initial contact with potential focus group participants. Therefore, VPI partners in each location assisted in the recruitment process. These VPI partners recruited participants from the following populations:

- Young women over the age of 18;
- Aboriginal women;
- Senior women;
- Women with disabilities;
- Women of differing sexual orientations;
- Women of differing ethnicities; and
- Women of differing economic status.

Focus groups are not intended to provide results that can be extrapolated to the broader population. However, effective qualitative research does require that participants be composed of individuals that are generally representative of the target population, and are balanced along key characteristics.

A recruitment screener was developed to assist the VPI partners in the recruitment process (Appendix 1) and served to screen out participants who would not feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions in a small group setting. Additionally:



- All focus group participants were notified they would receive a \$65 honorarium as a thank you for their participation; and
- Expenses were covered for some participants in rural locations who were required to travel significant distances and/or incur hotel costs to participate in the group.

It should be noted that at the Marystown location, one participant who currently lives in St. John's, travelled to Marystown to achieve the level of anonymity desired. Two other participants were from more rural areas of the Burin Peninsula and required accommodation in Marystown to enable their participation.

All Grand Falls/Windsor participants were from the immediate area, as was the case for the two St. John's focus groups, except for one participant who required taxi fare for the one-hour driving distance.

The consultants contacted focus group participants the day before the session to confirm their attendance. The following table details the number of confirmed participant's and the actual number of participants who attended each session.

Date	Location	# Recruited	# Participated
August 16, 2012	St. John's - Holiday Inn	8	7
August 16, 2012	St. John's - Holiday Inn	8	8
August 22, 2012	Grand Falls/Windsor - Advanced Education and Skills	7	5
August 22, 2012	Marystown - Marystown Hotel	8	7
Totals		31	28

2.1 Focus Group Process

Upon arrival, each participant was warmly welcomed and asked to review and sign *Consent to Participate in the Focus Group Study* (Appendix 2). Apart from agreeing to participate, the form described the high level of anonymity and confidentiality assured by the consultant team. It also requested agreement that the views and experiences of other participants be treated as private and not to be shared and/or discussed outside the focus group. The focus group moderator also reviewed the level of confidentiality expected as part of the opening remarks and reiterated that participant names would under no circumstances be disclosed to any party or agency.

The focus group moderator led discussion in accord with an approved Moderator's Guide (Appendix 3). The questioning focused on:

- What and how violence prevention services were accessed and any barriers in access that might have been experienced;
- Violence prevention services that were considered helpful and why; and
- Challenges experiences and possible solutions for supporting women who require violence prevention services.

The focus groups were two hours in duration, though two focus groups were slightly less at one hour and 45 minutes.

A note taker took notes and sometimes asked questions for clarification purposes.

3. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

3.1 General Awareness of the VPI

Only two of all the focus group participants reported they had heard of the VPI. However, there was wide, positive awareness of its initiatives, including for example the Purple Ribbon, the Respect Women and the Outrage NL campaigns.

3.2 Services Accessed

St. John's focus group participants reported the widest array of services accessed as they journeyed through their experience of violence. In no particular order, services accessed (and listed as named) included:

- Counsellors at shelters
- Victim Services
- Mental Health
- Police: Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- Health care: Physicians, community and public health nurses, therapists and counsellors
- Legal Aid
- Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS)
- The court system
- Drug/substance/alcohol abuse, including Al-Non
- Waypoints

- Single Parent Employment Support Program (SESP)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Housing
- Income Support
- Members of the House of Assembly
- Counsellors in general
- Choices for Youth
- Daybreak Daycare
- Human Resources Labour and Employment (Advanced Education and Skills)
- Emmanuel House
- Iris Kirby House
- St. John's Native Friendship Centre
- St. John's Women's Centre

In Grand Falls/Windsor and Marystown, the list of services accessed were as follows:

- RCMP
- Child Protection Services, CYFS
- Victim Services
- Women's Centre
- Counselling Services
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Hospitals (acute care for injuries sustained)
- Cara House (Grand Falls/Windsor)
- Status of Women (Grand Falls/Windsor)
- Coordinator, Central West Committee Against Violence
- Neighbours, family and friends
- Grace Sparkes House (Marystown)
- Department of Advanced Education and Skills

In St. John's, participants reported they learned of services through the RNC, CYFS, the Women's Centre or through direct self-referral. In St. John's, regardless of the source of initial referral, all participants reported the Iris Kirby House and/or the Women's Centre were critically important as they began their recovery as a victim of violence. Those who were or are still currently a resident of the Iris Kirby House believe they could not have coped without the invaluable service provided there.

A Personal Perspective

"At the Iris Kirby House, they helped me get a second stage home. They connected me to Victim Services. They were an advocate for me. I wish I had known about them before. I wish I knew these services were available."

Focus Group Participant



Words and phrases used to describe the Iris Kirby House experience include:

- They helped me learn about services as I went along;
- They listen and care. They are sincere;
- They are helping me to piece back my life and keep me on track;
- They have helped me find more permanent housing;
- We are a family there and we support each other;
- It's a safe place;
- They are navigators; and
- They do not judge me.

These descriptors echo those used by women who described the Grace Sparkes House in Marystown. Here again, the Grace Sparkes House was described as a safe haven. Indeed, the only regret voiced is that knowledge and awareness of the level of transitional housing and support offered is not widely known. These women felt certain more women would leave their violent situations if they knew such support was available.

Similarly, the Women's Centre in St. John's was also viewed as being an important source of support, particularly as a drop-in center and as a source of empowerment through women's groups and learning opportunities.

Of the five Grand Falls/Windsor focus group participants, two had utilized the services of Cara House in Gander. Inadequate access to

A Personal Perspective

"I was given a lipstick case with an emergency number hidden inside to dial when I needed it. And I did need it."

Focus Group Participant

counselling there was noted as a barrier and pressure to find permanent housing was the dominant priority; a priority they felt ill-equipped to deal with at the time. More navigation support was desired by these two focus group participants. With Cara House a 60-minute drive away from Grand Falls/Windsor, this was not viewed as an

impediment; rather the geographic distance from their home town offered a welcome dose of anonymity. However, for one woman, the prospect of a referral to a shelter in St. John's was quite troubling.

In each focus group, reference was also made to CYFS, a service that touches the lives of women who experience violence and who have children at home. Not surprisingly, depending upon the nature of the interaction of CYFS, the level of perceived support and counselling offered varied. However, it should be noted that a number of women

noted that social workers concern for the safety and well-being of their children served as a significant motivating factor in deciding to leave a relationship marked by violence.

3.3 Barriers and Challenges Experienced

Barriers and challenges identified by focus group participants were described as follows.

Legal Services/Court System: Women noted that the court system works to re-victimize them. In essence, there was a prevailing view that sentencing amounts to a “slap on the wrist” for the offender. The Family Violence Prevention Court was felt to be designed to support the offender and that offenders’ participation in counselling serves to favour lenient sentencing.

While Legal Aid support was positively acknowledged, lawyers were difficult to contact given their extremely heavy workload.

Other comments made included:

- Set court dates are too often postponed. Postponement is usually not communicated, leading to unnecessary and stressful preparation for court appearances.
- The effect of emotional abuse upon a child is not sufficiently recognized by judges. Men who are violent have too liberal access to their children. This may be a matter of educating judges.

Housing: Access to affordable, safe housing is a significant barrier and is growing worse given rapidly rising rental rates. Too often, available housing is in the worst and most dangerous neighbourhoods. Women expressed alarm over the troubling experiences their children have in these neighbourhoods. More second-stage housing was felt to be necessary, including for example community housing. More emergency, sheltered housing was also felt to be necessary. Women noted they should have a say about in what community and neighbourhood they will live. There was considerable comment about being moved to the bottom of a list if offered housing was refused.

A Personal Perspective

“I’m 63 years old. I’m afraid. Tell me how I am going to live on my own.”

Focus Group Participant

Income Support: It was also noted that women who leave violent relationships are particularly financially burdened. For example, a woman could learn that she is unable to secure utility services as bills from her permanent home have accumulated. A suggestion was made that a loan program could assist women to overcome these hurdles; hurdles that can keep women in limbo. Some women also noted that there are too many disincentives to return to work and school because of the potential loss of counselling support and other services they and their children require.

A Personal Perspective

"I cannot afford my kids on my own."

Focus Group Participant

Transition Support: Women who leave violent relationships noted that up to three to six months of transition support is required. Without this level of support, women wondered how they could make it on their own. They are forever changed and require time to acknowledge and action a new life direction. Without adequate time for transition support, they and their children are at-risk for returning to violent situations.

A Personal Perspective

"Don't leave the worst housing for people who are going through a difficult time."

Focus Group Participant

Sensitivity to Violence: While women acknowledged positive support from professionals they encountered, there were also considerable comments about professional insensitivity to the magnitude, nature and impact of violence that women experience. Some focus group participants noted that: police were said not to believe them; judges asked women to prove they had been threatened before being willing to issue a peace bond; and young women's reports about their experiences of violence were not taken seriously. Younger workers were generally felt to be naïve and without sufficient life experience to be dealing with the depth of issues that face women who have experienced violence. Much more sensitivity training was felt to be necessary.

A Personal Perspective

"We didn't know that shelters existed. If I had known, I would have left my situation earlier."

Focus Group Participant

Continuity Among Professionals: Some women noted that continuity among assigned public health nurses and social workers is a barrier. These are often professionals that are temporarily assigned, thereby impeding good, consistent case management. High turnover among professionals was felt to impede the level of trust and confidentiality that women require. In the Grand Falls/Windsor focus group, it was noted that home support

workers need higher levels of supervision and training and more thorough screening practices as within the current cadre of workers, there are known drug users.

Self-Awareness: Several women noted that they had been in violent family and spousal relationships for so long that they did not know they were living a life different from other women; that there could be a life free from violence. For some younger women in the St. John's focus groups, awareness of their abusive relationships was a gradual awareness process; an outcome of counselling and participation in women's discussion groups.

3.4 Suggestions for Improvements for Services to Victims of Violence

In addition to the suggestions and observations made above regarding services that were effective and improvements that could be made, the moderator asked each focus group participant to name one improvement or change they would personally like to recommend. The composite listing of these suggestions is as follows:

- Liquor stores should never sell liquor to a person who is intoxicated;
- Have tougher laws;
- The legal system needs to have a better understanding of the emotional trauma we go through;
- Better safety for women (safe houses, cab fares to get away);
- Better education for people in the system as a means of getting stiffer sentences. Police should have more power when they arrive at a scene;
- Remove the red tape that impedes access to required level of financial support;
- Stop re-victimization of the victims;
- The book, "When Love Hurts", should be required reading and free in all schools;
- Break the silence around the issue of violence. There should be a government Minister solely for violence issues;
- Have more Iris Kirby Houses;
- Raise awareness of what is abuse within the justice system such that perpetrators are not favoured;
- Ensure that there is increased awareness that it is not okay to hit. Recognize that men need help too. Teachers need to be involved too as school bullying must be stopped;
- Make housing affordable or provide funding to enable access to housing;
- Ensure services are networked so there is not fragmentation;



- Ensure women are assigned a system navigator;
- Helpers (workers) should be people who have real experience; someone who has walked the road;
- Have more female police officers and psychiatrists. We don't want to encounter more males;
- Make sure there are ways for women to call for help/to escape a dangerous situation quickly;
- Make sure there is more awareness of help that is available as knowledge is power;
- For young women aged 16 to 22, address the access issues/gap of services. These women are neither children or adults; and
- Communities need to be involved. In small communities, why can't an open community hall or safe room be set-up somewhere for a woman while she waits for the police or taxi to arrive? Remember, neighbours are often not willing or able to provide safe refuge.

One additional comment was spontaneously made at the end of each focus group which garnered further discussion and endorsement. Despite the sensitive nature of topics discussed within the focus groups, women expressed their genuine appreciation of the opportunity to participate. They reported having benefited from learning about the experiences of other women and the opportunity to debrief by talking about their own personal experiences. Women expressed their desire for more guided group discussions as a means of supporting their own healing and of providing assistance to other women.

Appendix 1: Focus Group Recruitment Screener

Background/Project Rationale

Thank you for agreeing to assist us with the recruitment of participants for the Violence Prevention Initiative's (VPI) upcoming focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups is to better understand female client satisfaction with violence prevention services. In total, four focus groups will be conducted. The table below outlines the location, date, times and venues for each of the four focus groups: ***(NOTE: THIS TABLE WILL BE COMPLETED ONCE THE LOCATION, DATES, TIMES AND VENUES HAVE BEEN FINALIZED)***

Location	Date	Time	Venue
St. John's	Thursday, August 16 th 2012		Holiday Inn
St. John's	Thursday, August 16 th 2012		Holiday Inn
Burin	Monday, August 20 th 2012	afternoon/evening	TBD
Grand Falls – Windsor	Tuesday, August 21 st 2012	12:00-2:00 PM	TBD

Each group will consist of eight participants and will be approximately two hours in duration. All focus group participants will receive a \$65 honorarium. The honorarium serves as both a "thank-you" and an incentive to participate in the group. It is also intended to be used to offset any expenses the participant may incur (i.e., transportation, childcare) as a result of their participation. We realize that some participants in rural locations may have to travel significant distances and/or incur hotel costs to participate in the group. We have a limited participant travel budget to cover these costs.

Although focus groups are not intended to provide results that can be extrapolated to the broader population, effective qualitative research requires that participants be composed of individuals that are generally representative of the target population, and are balanced along key characteristics. For the purposes of these focus groups, we would like to obtain representation from the following populations if possible:

- Young women over the age of 18;
- Aboriginal women;
- Senior women;
- Women with disabilities;
- Women of differing sexual orientations;
- Women of differing ethnicities; and
- Women of differing economic status.



The VPI has engaged Jane Helleur & Associates Inc. (JHA) to design, facilitate and prepare a summary report of the focus group proceedings. The JHA consultants assigned to this are Jane Helleur and Jean Cook.

Given the confidentiality surrounding this topic area, it is not appropriate for Jane and Jean to make initial contact with potential focus group participants. As a VPI partner we are reaching out to you to assist in the recruitment process. Jane and Jean will provide support and guidance to you throughout the recruitment process. Please feel free to contact them at anytime if you have any questions. Their contact information is as follows:

	Jean Cook	Jane Helleur
Telephone:	709-722-3344	709-722-8196
Mobile:	709-682-0968	709-689-4296
Email:	jean@jhelleurassoc.com	jane@jhelleurassoc.com

To facilitate the recruitment process, we have designed the following “participant screener/focus group invitation” for your use. The purpose of this screener/invitation is to assist you in recruiting focus group participants. You may modify the screener/invitation to make it your own.

Screener/Invitation

On behalf of the Provincial Violence Prevention Initiative, I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion that is taking place on **INSERT DATE, LOCATION AND TIME**. A focus group is an informal meeting to gather information on a particular topic, in this case violence prevention services. The discussion will be approximately two hours and some light refreshments will be served. You will also receive an honorarium of \$65 as a thank you for your time and to cover any expenses for you to attend such as travel or childcare. Would you be interested in participating? **If “no” thank and terminate the call. If “yes” proceed with the following questions...**

How comfortable would you say you are in expressing your thoughts and opinions freely in an informal setting with others? Would you say you are...(read the list below and record the appropriate response)

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Very comfortable | continue |
| 2 | Fairly comfortable | continue |
| 3 | Comfortable | continue |
| 4 | Not very comfortable | thank and terminate |
| 5 | Not at all comfortable | thank and terminate |



Jane Helleur and Associates Inc, a local consulting firm, will be leading the discussions. The two ladies who will be leading the discussions are Jane Helleur and Jean Cook.

All the information that is shared during the discussion will be kept confidential. All participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Individual input will remain confidential, as the report that Jane and Jean will prepare will combine all the comments from everyone. Your name will not appear anywhere in the report.

As the success of the focus group is dependent on everyone showing up, we ask that you contact Jean at 709-722-3344 in the event that you are unable to attend. This will give someone else the opportunity to participate in your absence. Also, as these are small groups, we have invited a small number of people to each and have limited space. Therefore we ask that you not bring along or send someone in your place.

With your permission, I will be passing along your name and telephone number to Jean Cook. Jean will be calling you the day before the focus group to confirm your attendance. Do I have your permission to pass along your name and telephone number to Jean for this purpose? **If "yes" continue, if "no" thank and terminate.**

Note to Recruiters:

- Please indicate if the participant is a member of the following sub-populations:
 - Young women over the age of 18;
 - Aboriginal women;
 - Senior women;
 - Women with disabilities;
 - Women of differing sexual orientations;
 - Women of differing ethnicities; and
 - Women of differing economic status.
- Please recruit 8 participants for each group
- Ask for proper spelling of name
- Ask for home, work and cellular number (if applicable)



Appendix 2: Consent to Participate in the Focus Group Study

Consent to Participate in Focus Group Study

The purpose of the group discussion and the nature of the questions have been explained to me.

I consent to take part in a focus group to discuss my experiences accessing violence prevention services and possible ways to improve these services for women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My participation is voluntary. I understand that I am free to leave the group at any time. If I decide not to participate at any time during the discussion, my decision will in no way affect the services that I may be receiving now or in the future.

None of my experiences or thoughts will be shared outside of the focus group by Jane Helleur & Associates, unless all identifying information is removed first. The information that I provide during the focus group will be grouped with answers from other people so that I cannot be identified.

I understand the views and experiences shared by others participating in the focus group are private and are not to be shared and/or discussed outside of the group.

Please Print Your Name

Please Sign Your Name

Date



Appendix 3: Client Satisfaction Focus Group Guide

Introduction & Warm-up:

20 minutes

- Introduce self and function of a moderator – to get your opinions; role of focus group discussions (all opinions are important; look for a variety of opinions; important to understand how you agree as well as disagree).
- Explain process of focus groups: round table discussion, not a questions and answer period;
- Explain the role of the note taker;
- Today we are going to discuss your experiences in accessing violence prevention services in terms of what worked well, what areas require attention and what improvements would be beneficial. Any questions?
- Review the consent form with participants and explain the importance of confidentiality both from Jane and Jean (no names in report, everyone's identity protected) and among participants. Answer any questions participants have regarding the consent form. Obtain consent from participants before proceeding.
- Acknowledge that the topic we will be discussing can sometimes result in the recall of unpleasant memories of an extremely difficult time in one's life. Explain how participants can access support services if required both during and/or after the focus group.
- Ask if anyone has heard of the Violence Prevention Initiative. If participants have heard of the VPI, ask what they know. Jean to provide a brief overview of the VPI and explain the purpose of the focus groups. Jean to answer any questions they might have.
- Participant introduction, ask them to introduce themselves including; name, who lives in their home with them, and one thing that they like to do for fun.

Accessing Violence Prevention Services

40 minutes

To begin, I would like to learn more about the violence prevention services that you accessed.

Probes:

- What services did you access?
- How did you learn about these services?
- How did you gain access?
- What barriers, if any, did you encounter in accessing the service/services you required?



- How did you overcome these barriers?

Jean to record main discussion points on the flipchart

Accessing Violence Prevention Services – Worked Well

30 minutes

When you think about the services that you accessed, what was helpful?

- What worked well? Why?
- Where did you obtain the greatest support? Why do you feel that way?

Jean to record main discussion points on the flipchart

Accessing Violence Prevention Services – Challenges & Solutions 30 minutes

Now I would like to learn a little more about the challenges that you faced when accessing the supports and services you required.

- What challenges, if any, did you face?
- How did you overcome these challenges?
- What would have made it easier for you to access the supports and services you required? Why?
- If you could make one suggestion to improve access to violence prevention services, what would it be? Why?
- How could women be better supported when accessing violence prevention services?

Jean to record main discussion points on the flipchart

Thanks & Closure:

On behalf of the Violence Prevention Initiative, I would like to thank each of you for coming in and sharing your experiences with us. Thank you for your participation.

Jean and Jane to give participants' their honorariums and have them sign the sign off sheet