

Recommendations from

**A Safer Province for
Everyone: Responding to
Violence Against
Sex Workers
May 2019 Conference**

One-Year Update

June 2020

A SAFER PROVINCE FOR EVERYONE:

Responding to Violence Against Sex Workers

May 28-29, 2019

On May 28-29, 2019, a diverse group of stakeholders from across BC came together in Vancouver on the unceded Coast Salish territories of the X̱wməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7meshi (Squamish), and əsəlilwətaʔt̚ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations to discuss best practices in responding to violence in the context of sex work. The first of its kind, Living in Community (LIC)'s Safer Province for Everyone Conference hosted sex workers, sex worker organizations, Indigenous organizations, anti-violence organizations, police, three levels of government, health authorities, social service providers, legal organizations, and others from across the province.

Over 130 people attended the conference where they heard from keynote speakers and participated in a series of workshops throughout the two days. Importantly, there were many people with lived experience in sex work in attendance who informed the dialogue in powerful and important ways.

The goals of the Safer Province for Everyone Conference were to develop a provincial network of stakeholders who are supporting sex worker health and safety, as well as to develop a provincial action plan with recommendations to target the violence that continues toward sex workers.

This one-year update provides information on progress made on these recommendations in the past year.

To view the original conference report, visit our website at www.livingincommunity.ca.

Recommendation Area 1: Collaboration & Multisectoral Approaches

Recommendations

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1.1 Engage municipal actors and City councillors in sex work issues, particularly around elections given that municipalities and city councils are well-positioned to educate and enact change.

This is an ongoing action for Living in Community, and more focus will be placed on this action in the lead-up to the next municipal election in 2022.

1.2 Develop more partnerships and collaboration between anti-violence organizations and sex work organizations on funding and initiatives throughout BC.

Living in Community has developed deeper relationships with anti-violence organizations throughout BC. The Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) and WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre in Vancouver have joined LIC's Steering Committee. Several anti-violence organizations throughout the province now participate in our BC Sex Work Support Service Network, an initiative which was created following the 2019 conference.

1.3 Non-sex worker organizations ally with relevant organizations who can provide services.

Though not yet comprehensive, increased allyship has started to build. The participation of EVA BC and WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre in LIC's work is building allyship between sex work organizations and anti-violence organizations. The BC Sex Work Support Service Network is providing another means for both sex work organizations and their allies (such as shelters, women's organizations, and anti-violence organizations) to work together and learn from each other.

1.4 Develop regional alliances of rural organizations to support sex workers

As the BC Sex Work Support Service Network meets and develops relationships over time, regional alliances of organizations are beginning to build. The Network includes more than 20 organizations across BC.

Recommendation Area 2: Networking & Mentoring Among Sex Work Organizations

Recommendations

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2.1 Develop mentorship and networking relationships between urban sex worker organizations and rural women's, health, and anti-violence organizations to improve services to rural sex workers.

Within the BC Sex Work Support Service Network, organic mentorship and networking relationships are building. Organizations and individuals from across the province can share their needs, expertise, and stories of what is happening in their communities, leading to sharing best practices and improving services across communities.

2.2 Create list of sex worker-friendly spaces and services to distribute to travelling sex workers.

Living in Community, in partnership with organizations and stakeholders across the province, is working on this project and plans to complete it by fall 2020.

Recommendation Area 3: Bad Date Reporting

Recommendations

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- 3.1 Develop provincial bad date reporting process in collaboration with organizations serving sex workers. This process must meet the needs of sex workers who travel and work in different environments at different times.
- 3.2 Develop reporting mechanism with specific information that is relevant to sex workers - comprehensive but can be tailored (i.e. description of vehicle not necessary for indoor workers).
- 3.3 Provide comprehensive funding to develop databases that are functional and protected.
- 3.4 Pool efforts to lobby for large scale systemic change at policy and legislative level.

The recommendations in this section are for sex work support organizations and funders.

In early 2020, sex work organizations in BC successfully applied for funding to create and implement a provincial bad date reporting system. The project is currently on hold due to financial implications of COVID-19 experienced by the funder. Living in Community plans to be part of the provincial lobbying and advocacy effort when this project progresses.

Recommendation Area 4: Organizational Culture & Accountability

Recommendations

- 4.1 All support organizations need to have diversified staff, board, and volunteers.
- 4.2 Create spaces and resources led by and for racialized sex workers.
- 4.3 Redistribute funding and power so that racialized sex workers are hired and properly compensated for their expertise in organizations and not used in tokenized positions.
- 4.4 Anti-violence organizations need to center sex workers' voices and do their own internal work.
- 4.5 Evaluate accessibility of organizations and services for sex workers.
- 4.6 Increase accountability regarding whiteness and power hierarchies among non-profits who work with racialized sex workers.
- 4.7 Be aware of the stigmatizing nature of the term exiting. Instead, use 'transitioning', 'retirement' or 'career change.'
- 4.8 Re-frame the term 'hard-to-reach populations.' Services are inaccessible, unsafe, and there is often no accountability.

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The recommendations in this section are for sex work support organizations, anti-violence organizations, and other community organizations, and the recommendations around changing language apply to all stakeholders.

Living in Community supports all organizations in implementing the recommendations in this section, and we continue to deepen our own implementation of them as well. Our trainings, including Curriculum for Change, can help organizations identify ways to increase the accessibility and diversification of their services, staff, and organizational cultures, and to realize practices and language that may be stigmatizing and can be improved. Internally, over the past year we have welcomed more diverse membership to our Steering Committee including EVA BC, WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre, and Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV).

Recommendation Area 5: Funding

Recommendation

5.1 Commit strong funding for sex work organizations across the province including anti-violence and women's organizations who support sex workers.

One-Year Update

The recommendation in this section is for funders, but Living in Community continues to advocate for this recommendation to be implemented. Our submissions to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for their public consultations on the 2020 and 2021 provincial budgets included the recommendation that provincial government funding support sex worker safety across the province.

Recommendation Area 6: Policing

Recommendations

- 6.1 Build more trust and respect of the community, including the use of respectful language.
- 6.2 In-person, mandatory, experiential training for police with trauma-informed practices which should also be built into basic officer training.
- 6.3 All police organizations should have sex work liaisons including Indigenous liaisons.
- 6.4 Develop accountability mechanisms for guidelines, policies and protocols.
- 6.5 Develop a process to bring together police, anti-violence organizations, sex workers, and sex work support organizations to better understand problems and address concerns with Third Party Reporting.
- 6.6 Develop plan to review and implement the Provincial Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines, with guidance from sex workers across BC, that ensures the Guidelines support safety and relationship-building.

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The recommendations in this section are for law enforcement agencies. In the past, Living in Community has done training, education, and advocacy with various law enforcement agencies throughout the province, and we continue to advocate for law enforcement to implement these recommendations.

Recommendation Area 7: Public Education & Advocacy

Recommendations

7.1 Engage community around a campaign to address the shortcomings of the Ministry of Children and Family Development to ensure child apprehension doesn't happen simply because the parent is a sex worker and to speed up family reunification processes.

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This recommendation is for sex work support organizations.

Recommendation Area 7: Public Education & Advocacy (continued)

Recommendations

7.2 Develop public education campaigns to prevent and address sex work stigma.

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Living in Community has begun initial planning to develop a public education module. We hope to fully create and implement this module in fall 2020, pending receiving the funding to do so.

Recommendation Area 8: Housing

Recommendations

- 8.1 Develop full-security housing options for female sex workers including family housing.
- 8.2 Ensure all housing staff are in 'ethical alignment' including strengths-based, non-judgmental services.

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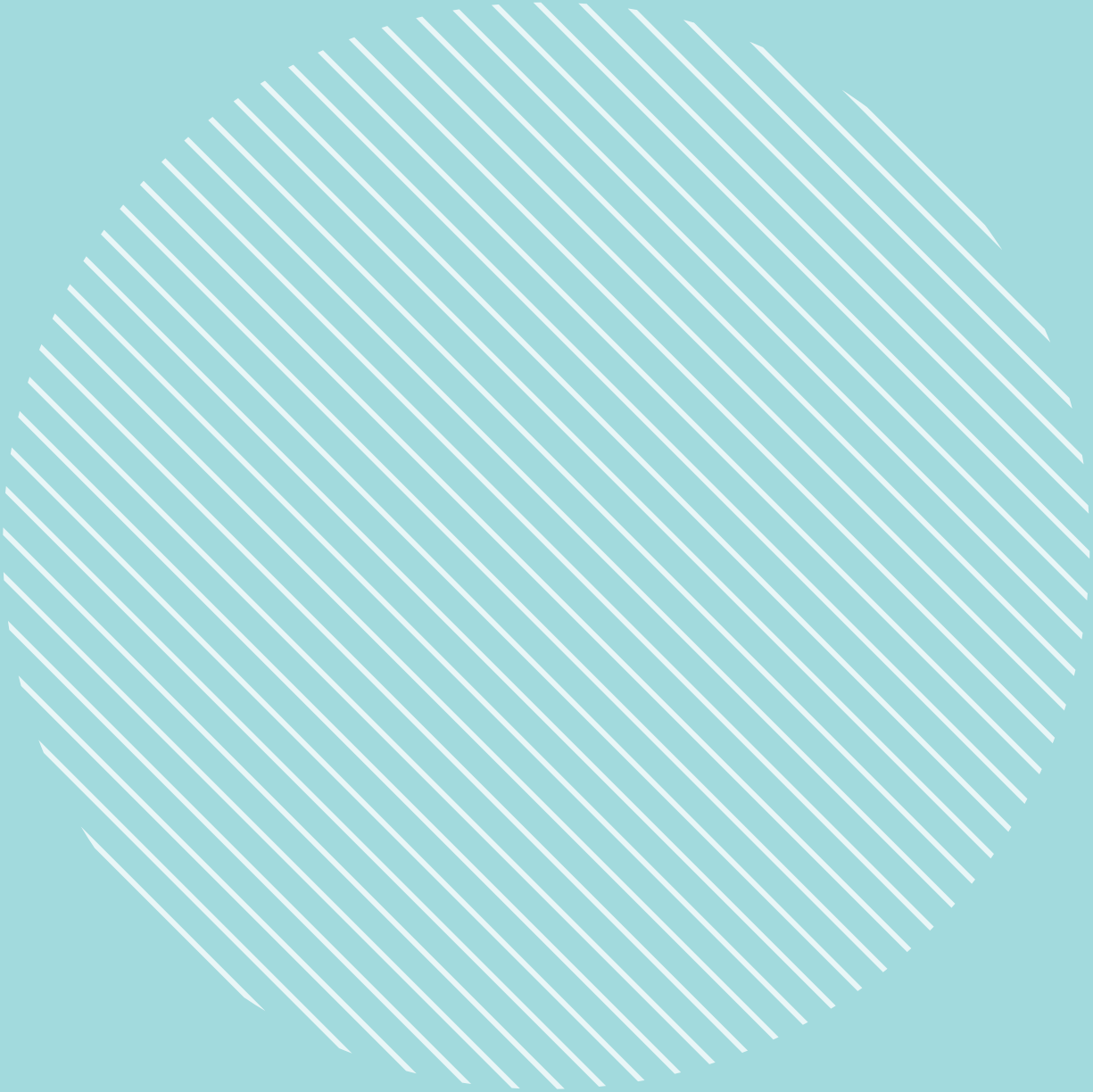
The recommendations in this section are for BC Housing and housing providers. Living in Community supports these entities in implementing the recommendations in this section. In the past we have delivered trainings like our Curriculum for Change workshop to housing providers, and are still available to do so.

Stay up to date with progress on these recommendations:

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