

Initial Stages of Development for an Intersectoral Network on Trans-Affirming Practice to Better Support Sexual Assault Survivors in Ontario

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BACKGROUND

- Transgender (trans) persons are significantly impacted by sexual violence, may experience complex needs post-victimization, and delay or avoid seeking care due to discrimination in healthcare settings (Bauer & Scheim, 2015; Bauer et al., 2014; munson & Cook-Daniels, 2016)
- A 2017 survey of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) across Ontario’s 35 Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres (SA/DVTCs) established a need for training in the provision of trans-affirming care and highlighted a gap in knowledge related to local trans-positive organizations with whom to refer or consult (Du Mont et al., 2019)
- In 2018, we worked with an advisory group of trans community members and allies (e.g., Rainbow Health Ontario) to design, pilot, and evaluate a trans-affirming curriculum for SANEs
- There remains a pressing need to connect SANEs with trans-positive service providers across sectors to enhance the provision of comprehensive, sensitive, and appropriate care to trans survivors across Ontario

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Facilitate the initial development of a provincial intersectoral network on trans-affirming practice to better support sexual assault survivors (see Figure 1, Stage 1, Planning) by:

- (1) Mobilizing Knowledge** on the newly developed and successfully evaluated SANE curriculum, and
- (2) Engaging Community** at two interlocking levels of practice:
 - Regionally:** Connect trans-positive community organizations and SA/DVTCs to establish longer-term referral relationships, increase collaboration, and enhance the continuum of care for trans survivors
 - Provincially:** Brainstorm the formation of a provincial network to advance research, policy, and practice on sexual violence against trans communities

METHOD

- Identified potential network members from across Ontario, extending invitations in May/June 2019 to managers of hospital-based SA/DVTCs and leaders of local community organizations
- Convened 7 regional knowledge mobilization and community engagement meetings across the province
- Introduced new SANE curriculum and facilitated discussion on intersectoral collaboration using activities guided by community development literature and design thinking (e.g., World Café Conversations)
- Recorded highlights of discussions and identified key insights through thematic analysis
- Invited participants to indicate their interest in future contact for development of the provincial network

STAGE 1
PLANNING

STAGE 2
FORMATION

STAGE 3
MATURATION

STAGE 4
SUSTAINABILITY

STAGE 5
TERMINATION OR
TRANSITION

Figure 1: Lifecycle Evolutionary Model of Networks (Robeson, 2009)

(1) Education/Training: Build upon existing curriculum for SANEs to design cross-sectoral education/training on the provision of trans-affirming care

(2) Peer Involvement: Center the voices, experiences, and needs of trans community members in partnership building within and among regions. Empower trans communities, adequately acknowledge and compensate peer workers and advocates for their work

(3) Advocacy: Advocate for broader change that addresses sexual violence against trans communities – at both the institutional (hospital policies/procedures to ensure safer environments for trans survivors) and structural (policy change to address the underlying social causes of violence against trans persons) levels

Intersectional Framework

Adaptability

Capacity Building

Trans Inclusivity

Accountability

Safety

Guidelines/Standards

Peer Involvement

Education/Training

Knowledge Sharing/Exchange

Accessibility

Advocacy

Trauma-/Violence-Informed

Equity

Lack of Resources

Accreditation

Integrated/Comprehensive Supports

(4) Accessibility: Enhance the geographical, physical, and/or social accessibility of services and supports for trans survivors. Address emergency departments as a barrier to accessing health services, including those offered by the SA/DVTCs

(5) Knowledge Sharing/Exchange: Identify more effective modes of communication and knowledge mobilization among service providers and supports (e.g., share resources through a virtual platform, develop a comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible resource list that could aid in the provision of better and safe(r) referrals for trans survivors)

RESULTS

- Between 7 June and 11 July 2019, 106 representatives from 96 SA/DVTCs and trans-positive community organizations across Ontario attended 1 of 7 regional meetings held in Toronto, Mississauga, North York, London, Ottawa, Sudbury, and Thunder Bay
- 93 (97%) organizations expressed interest in remaining a part of the network’s development
- 31 additional organizations (unable to send a representative to attend a meeting) expressed interest in continued development of the network
- 18 themes related to regional and provincial intersectoral collaboration to address sexual assault against trans persons reflect key insights garnered from participants across the 7 regional meetings (see Figure 2)

DISCUSSION & NEXT STEPS

- As indicated by the high number of organizations across Ontario interested in continued involvement with network development, sexual violence against trans persons is a timely issue relevant to the enhancement of policy, practice, and leadership across sectors
- Across the 7 meetings, several critical insights emerged, which speak to the importance of provincial network and its goals for improving services and supports for trans survivors
- Next steps include further relationship-building among organizations and developing a shared sense of the network’s identity by surveying meeting participants about the network’s mission, vision, and values (see Figure 1, Stage 2, Formation)
- Ultimate goal is to mature and sustain the network through core activities and ongoing opportunities for collaborative interaction (see Figure 1, Stages 3 and 4, Maturation and Sustainability)

Figure 2: Key Insights from Regional Meetings