



women's support network  
of york region

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2017**

# **Women's Support Network of York Region**

## *Acknowledgements*

The Women's Support Network Strategic Plan is dedicated to all the women in York region who have experienced sexual violence in their lives and to all people working to end sexual violence against women.

## *Commitment*

...the eradication of sexual violence.

## *Our Understanding*

We are part of a global community of women and we commit to work in solidarity to ensure women's equality rights locally and internationally.

## Women's Support Network of York Region 2013-2017 Strategic Plan

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### *Introduction*

The Women's Support Network of York Region (WSN) is a well-established organization that has been serving the York Region for 21 years to respond and educate around sexual violence.

WSN will be completing its 2009-2013 strategic plan on March 31<sup>st</sup> and the directions laid out in that plan will be clearly met. The 2013-2017 Strategic Plan will focus WSN in moving toward an organization that is further connected to the York region community, not only as clients and partners but also as donors and board members in order to ensure sustainability.

### *WSN's core business*

Women's Support Network's core services receives funding from the Ministry of Attorney General, Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division.

Women's Support Network receives approximately two thousand calls on the **24-hour Crisis Line** annually, responding to individuals who have been affected by sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment, date rape and any form of violence. The Crisis Line operates 24-hours/per day every day of the year.

The **Counselling Program** provides crisis counselling within forty-eight hours of the initial contact. WSN also offers ongoing individual counselling. The counselling program will also be offering workshops throughout the year.

Through our **Public Education/Community Outreach Program** WSN provides education and awareness on issues of sexual violence, to schools community agencies, businesses, service clubs, community groups etc.

The **Anti-Human Trafficking Program** is a program initiated in 2011 to establish a collaborative community approach to addressing trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation within York region. The Program is funded by the Status of Women Canada, and works closely with both York Regional Police and Victim Services of York Region to ensure that women and girls caught up in trafficking are given the care and support that they need. Working with community partners, a case manager assists with emergency safe housing, basic necessities and court support. The program designed a protocol and procedures based on gender analysis that the community of York Region have signed onto to ensure the program grows as needed.

## *Mandate, Values and Guiding Principles and goal*

We understand that we are part of a global community of women and we commit to work in solidarity to ensure women's equality rights locally and internationally.

### **MANDATE**

The Women's Support Network of York Region is a rape crisis centre dedicated to providing free, confidential services for women who have experienced sexual violence.

We offer:

- 24-hour crisis counseling on our crisis line
- counseling
- Support groups and workshops
- Outreach and public education
- Systems support and advocacy
- Community based training

Women's Support Network is committed to a grassroots, feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression framework.

Goal: Eradicate sexual violence

### **VALUES and GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

1. We are committed to providing service excellence by working from an integrated Feminist Anti-Racist/Anti-Oppression framework that is woman-centered and woman – focused. We particularly acknowledge the differential impact of sexual violence on racialized and marginalized communities. We are committed to non-exclusionary policy, practice and programs. We serve all women who identify as women.
2. Education and knowledge is power. We are committed to supporting the education of clients, as well as on-going education and self-care for staff, board members and volunteers.
3. We are committed to a transparent continual review and evaluation of policy, programs and practice. We will measure equity by results, not by intentions. We have a commitment to provide a Client space within our facilities and we actively seek client-driven direction and feedback.
4. We are committed to taking a lead role in the community as a catalyst for change, and will continue to have fresh ideas, innovations and “thinking outside of the box”.

## *The Context – Trends for Sexual Violence in York Region*

### **Sexual Violence remains a critical social issue**

Sexual Violence is a social issue that continues to go unspoken and ignored. As a social issue, it often intersects with other issues such as poverty, housing, age, immigration, Aboriginal status and domestic violence. As such, it is the issue that requires that we examine the systemic issues which leads to the sexual violence in order to address the core issues.

The statistics that are used in the Sexual Violence Action Plan tell us that sexual violence is an urgent social problem:

- Over a third of women have experienced some form of sexual assault in their life since the age of 16.
- Over 93% of reported adult sexual assault victims are female, while over 97% of those accused are male.
- The victim and the accused are known to each other in 82% of cases – as friends, acquaintances or family members.
- An estimated 15% of female university students experience sexual assault.
- Victims turn to people they know for help. They confide in friends, and turn to family members, co-workers, doctors and nurses.
- Fewer than 10% of sexual assault victims report the crime to the police. Studies estimate that the economic cost of violence against women across
- Canada is in the billions of dollars. This includes the costs of health, criminal justice and social services as well as lost productivity.

The statistics around sexual violence are often much more difficult to gather as compared to domestic violence:

- Women do not report sexual violence as a crime to the police. In many locations, police statistics around sexual violence continue to go down while sexual assault centres and hospitals are seeing a rise in sexual violence. As such, police statistics are an unreliable source to measure the incidence of sexual violence.
- Sexual violence as a term is broad and includes crimes such as sexual assault and sexual exploitation through human trafficking, as well as other acts including sexual harassment and sexual exploitation through the use of technology and the Internet.

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## **The Ontario government has identified sexual violence as a priority**

The Ontario government, as part as its Sexual Violence Action Plan in 2009 committed to an investment to address sexual violence through public education and improving services, helping survivors navigate the system of supports and improve supports to Aboriginal women and Francophone women. It recognized a broad understanding of sexual violence including addressing the issues around human trafficking. The plan recognizes that sexual violence is a systemic issue and will not be readily addressed through a four year investment.

## **WSN is a leader in the area of Anti-Human Trafficking**

“The program helped open my eyes to what I was meant to do. Without the help of your great staff, I would have never changed my life around. I was happy with all the resources and people I got connected with. WSN was a critical support network in the change I decided to make.”

In 2011, WSN secured funding from Status of Women Canada for an innovative project supplemented by the support of the Canadian Women's Foundation.



The Anti-Human Trafficking Program provides outreach and case management services for women and girls who are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, or at-risk for trafficking. Services are non-judgmental and informed by a feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppression framework. Through the partnerships with the regional committee members, and funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation, the case manager provides survivors with immediate and ongoing support including, trauma-informed counselling, legal support, and housing assistance. To date, 40 women have received support. Other activities conducted by the Anti-Human Trafficking Program include: raising awareness of the issue; developing tools and resources (e.g., screening tool); facilitating trainings on human trafficking for service providers; creating workshops and materials to increase public awareness; and providing a 24/7 helpline that trafficked women or community members can call for assistance.

## The demographics of York Region

The Regional Municipality of York is actually a collection of nine local municipalities: the City of Markham, the City of Vaughan, the Town of Richmond Hill, the Town of Newmarket, the Town of Aurora, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Town of East Gwillimbury, the Town of Georgina and the Township of King.

There are some very interesting demographic information that will inform the implementation of the plan.

- The population who are immigrants in York region is 43%. The average in Ontario is 28%. (Source: 2006 Census)
- Percentage of York Region that are residents with a university degree is 19.7%. (The average in Ontario is 15%. (Source: 2001 Census)

### Mother Tongue (2006 Census)

	York	Ontario
English only	472,905	8,230,705
French only	7,700	488,815

English and French	1,125	32,685
Other Language(s)	405,615	3,276,685

### Immigrant status (2006 Census)

	York	Ontario
Non-Immigrants	499,645	8,512,020
Immigrants	380,530	3,398,725
Non-permanent residents	7,170	118,150

### Total Aboriginal Identity Population (2006 Census)

	York	Ontario
Total Aboriginal Identity Population	3,595	242,490

- In the year 2031, it is estimated that there will be 1.5 million people in York with almost 2.5 times as many people over 50 than today.

## *2013-2017 Strategic Directions*

### **Strategic Direction 1: Women's Support Network delivers exceptional programs and services**

**Goals:**

- a) Implement a new method to deliver the Crisis Line that does not overburden staff resources.
- b) Continue to develop the Counseling Services and Public Education as discreet functions with appropriate staff and other supports.
- c) Secure funding for the Anti-Human Trafficking Program
- d) Research and examine the viability for new programs delivered through WSN.

### **Strategic Direction 2: Women's Support Network are leaders in York region and beyond around sexual violence.**

**Goals:**

- a) Strategically develop the media profile for WSN so that it increases the visibility to the widest population in York region.
- b) Cost out, including identifying potential partners, to deliver services through Satellite offices
- c) Identify and work closely with key partners at the local, provincial and national level.
- d) Continue community engagement, including corporate donors, through public education and fund development activities.

### **Strategic Direction 3: Women's Support Network has a diversified funding base.**

**Goals:**

- a) Ensure Ministry of the Attorney General funding continues.
- b) Develop a Fund development plan that builds on existing fund development strategies.
- c) Identify new potential funders and apply for specific programs.

### **Strategic Direction 4: Women's Support Network is a healthy organization.**

**Goals:**

- a) Through fund development increase the number of staff that can support the work of WSN
- b) Full complement of board members with most living in the York region
- c) Clear roles and responsibilities for board and staff.
- d) Ongoing staff and board supports to ensure high quality services.

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## WSN Strategic Plan 2013-2017 Summary

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