SUPER HOs
WOMEN IN THE KNOW!

a project and resource guide
by sex workers

This manual is dedicated to **Carolyn Connolly**
November 16, 1953 – August 2, 2008
and to all sex workers who are victims and survivors of violence

Participants in the creation of this manual include:
Brandi Nashkewa
Carol Danis
Carin Eising
Elizabeth Murphy
Lisa
Margaret
Mary Kay MacVicar
Sean Major
Sushi
Wendy Babcock

A big Thank You to the following folks for their editing suggestions:
Wendy Babcock
Taryn Williams

Special Thanks to Sushi and Michael
for their cover design and art contributions

This project was funded by Status of Women Canada

In partnership with:
Street Health Community Nursing Foundation
Regent Park Community Health Centre

TABLE OF CONTENTS!

STARTING

what is a safer stroll project? 7
starting a safer stroll project 7
who are sex workers? 8

STRUCTURE

ask the experts 9
harm reduction 9
link the project to existing services 10
remember the practical 10
to recap 10
challenges sex workers face 11

BEST PRACTICES

ask the experts 13
create a sex worker positive environment 14
provide services in a non-judgemental way 15
remember the practical 16
to recap 16

WORK SHOPS

workshops for a safer stroll project 19-21
"who are sex workers?" workshop 22
stigma and sex work 23
potential workshop about stigma in sex work 24

RESOURCES

safety in sex work 27-29
taking a bad date report 30
words of women: dealing with stress 31
sex work and the law 32-33

FORMS

resource pages for sex workers: bad date report form 34
resource pages for sex workers: emergency response plan 35-36

STARTING & STRUCTURE!

what is a safer stroll project?

The safer stroll outreach project (Safer Stroll) is a community-based, capacity building program with the goals of increasing the capacity of female sex workers to better respond to high risk situations and violence related to sex work and to increase the capacity of community service agencies to better respond to violence against women involved in sex work. The Safer Stroll began in May 2008 and is a partnership of Street Health, The Bad Date Coalition, and the Regent Park Community Health Centre. The Safer Stroll operates under a harm reduction philosophy minimizing risks associated with sex work.

starting a safer stroll project

A **SAFER STROLL** project should follow certain guidelines in order to create an environment which is safe, inclusive and anti-oppressive in nature. As sex work can be a sensitive subject it is important to create an environment of trust.

PEER WORKERS and **AGENCY STAFF** should ensure that general guidelines are followed in the execution of peer work, workshops, and other components of a safer stroll project.

basic guidelines could include:
CONFIDENTIALITY
RESPECT *a space for every person without judgement*
TAKE TURNS *so that every person has space to talk*
a space in which everyone can **AGREE TO DISAGREE**
A SEX WORK *and* **SEX WORKER POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT** *in which hurtful and discriminatory language and actions are discouraged and discussed in an open way to encourage learning*

With these basic guidelines covered it is possible to delve into more complex parts of creating and implementing a safer stroll outreach project.

The first component of a safer stroll project is its structure. But before we talk about the structure of a safer stroll project it makes sense to first discuss just who may be a sex worker, and what sex work can look like.

who are sex workers?

what exactly is sex work?

What work is considered sex work?

Sex workers may be street sex workers, incall sex workers, massage parlour attendants, escorts, strippers, phone sex operators, dominatrix, submissives, porn actors, topless waitresses, and nude models to name a few.

What is sex work?

Sex work can broadly be described as the exchange of sexual services for payment.

Sexual services include but are not limited to oral sex, hand jobs, vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, body rub (for example nude massage), erotic dancing (lap dancing, table dancing), and dirty talk (phone sex, text sex).

Payment can include money, payment of bills, a place to sleep, and drugs or alcohol or many other services or items of value.

LOOK HERE: *Potential Workshop*

For a workshop which could help in defining sex work for both sex workers and agency settings, please see **page 28**.

structure of a safer stroll project

ASK THE EXPERTS

Remember that sex workers are the experts in their own lives and that this expertise should be sought after. Current or former sex workers should be employed to work on the project as facilitators, coordinators, and presenters. Sex workers should be at the forefront of project development.

Talk with sex workers who already receive services from your agency or with whom you conduct outreach activities. Ask them about what they need to feel safe, what training they would like, or what they see as basics necessary for them to attend training (such as food, etc). Be flexible, and work where possible, from sex workers' priorities first.

> *"You're never alone, so if someone approached you that was bad, you have other voices."*

HARM REDUCTION

Harm Reduction refers to a range of practical strategies and policies designed to reduce harmful consequences of drug use.

A peer project that is rooted in harm reduction should employ strategies designed to reduce the harmful consequences of sex work versus offering strategies that only promote exiting sex work. Harm Reduction promotes people as the experts of their lives.

Sex workers who become participants in the project should be considered "peer workers" and should be encouraged and supported to explore opportunities for work, training and education which may include otheer areas of work available at your agency. (For example, in areas of outreach.)

At the same time, support needs to be built in the project; counselling, referrals, harm reduction supplies, and harm reduction information should all be made freely available.

LINK THE PROJECT TO EXISTING SERVICES

It is important that the project is linked with existing services that currently works with sex workers. The project should be located in the neighbourhood or area in which sex workers live and / or work. That is, services should be where they are most needed.

Partner agencies should be sought whenever possible and where appropriate. After all, it is likely that those who use the services of your agency also use the services of other agencies in the community. Partner with agencies who have a similar mandate and who have similar ideologies in regards to anti-oppressive and inclusive service provision.

CONSIDER PRACTICAL NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Finally, don't forget the practical elements: try to meet the learning needs of each group (consider, for example, the length of the class, and how participants learn) Have food, drinks, transit tokens, harm reduction supplies and other necessities available. A plan is a good idea, but flexibility is key and any plan should consider different learning styles, needs and literacy levels.

TO RECAP: *THE STRUCTURE OF A SAFER STROLL PROJECT*

- Sex workers are experts in their own lives; seek this expertise
- Employ sex workers where possible
- Be informed about barriers and challenges which sex workers might face
- Keep sex workers strengths and resiliency at the forefront
- Be flexible
- Use a harm reduction framework. It works.
- Pay sex workers as "peer workers" and give them the rights and responsibilities of workers
- Build supports into the project
- Tie the project with other services that already provide services for sex workers
- Partner with similar agencies
- Locate services where and when they are needed
- Don't forget the practical in your project

It is now possible to look at the *challenges* that sex workers may face in working in a safer stroll outreach project.

Following that, this manual will take a look at the *best practices* that agencies can put into place to attempt to address some of these challenges.

challenges sex workers face in a safer stroll outreach project

SEX WORKERS:

- may be at high risk for arrest and therefore legal support and flexibility may be required
- may have their sex work experience confused with their sexuality
  that is, assumptions that a sex worker will sleep with anyone, is a nymphomaniac, or is a certain sexual orientation based upon their sexual behaviour during their sex work
- involved in the program may find that their relationships change; they are now both "peer workers" in the agency while simultaneously being "clients"
- may be at risk of unwanted encounters with johns at any given time
- may be known to the police for being involved (or having been involved) in sex work and this may result in harassment or questioning from the police during outreach activities
- may feel ashamed if they are not allowed to talk about their experiences in sex work in agency settings
- may feel that they cannot make career changes due to the stigma associated with sex work; this may keep them in sex work
- may find it difficult to make the transition into a role of "peer worker" when they previously were solely in the role of "client" and they may also find it difficult to switch back to the other role
- may be hit on or solicited by clients or staff of your agency
- may experience stigma or discrimination from clients and / or staff
- may experience difficulties if they must have a criminal record check to become workers in an agency setting since they may have prostitution related charges
- may be challenged by time requirements of early work times
  that is, 9AM start times may be difficult if they were working late the night before
- may find that an agency pays much less than what they are used to making in sex work
- may find it difficult if they are identified as "sex workers" in an agency setting if they wanted to keep their experience in sex work private

> *It opened my eyes to see things a bit different about ALL people and everything around me.*

BEST PRACTICES!

best practices

ASK THE EXPERTS

Involve sex workers from the start and throughout. This can include sex worker involvement on the board of directors, advisory groups, research departments, in evaluations and as volunteers. And of course, hire sex workers: as peer workers and as other staff.

Look for expertise from the experts in their own lives: sex workers should be the people spoken to first when it comes to change efforts which affect them. In this vain, have sex worker specific programming and training. In addition to specific projects such as a safer stroll outreach project, have programming available to everyone around topics of sex work. Provide professional training opportunities for sex workers.

> *Weekly support is important for true input into our program. Knowing that others value and support us brings us to a new level of understanding.*

Programming could include self-defense lessons, advocacy work, safety workshops, workshops on how to work independently and free of a pimp, and workshops on safe ways for sex workers to promote their work. As well, offer referrals or specific programming for transgender and male sex workers. Different populations face a multiplicity of unique and specific barriers. It is important that your agency creates programming and uses language inclusive and specific to these populations.

create a sex worker positive environment

Create a drop-in space specifically for people who engage in sex work. Have a zero tolerance attitude to negative attitudes about sex work and sex workers – both from staff and clients. Proactively address biases and discrimination directed at sex workers.

Create a friendly and welcoming space for sex workers. This can be done by engaging in activities that promote talking about sex work, sex worker safety and sexual health.

Encourage a sex positive space and be open to frank and casual language around sex. Have the ability to reach into taboos. Create groups in which sex workers can drop-in and speak freely, and maybe play a game of dirty bingo, cards, or just socialize! As well, you should keep sex worker friendly resources and information on display in your agency.

MAKE SURE SEX WORKERS FEEL SAFE

Ensure that sex workers are safe. Assist sex workers to create a safety plan and encourage sex workers to fill in an Emergency Response Sheet, which can be used by agency staff in the case that a sex worker goes missing or is arrested.

Similarly, sex workers should be able to easily access the Bad Date book, and staff should know how to take a bad date report when a sex worker has experienced a bad date. Staff should provide support and assistance to women who have experienced a bad date.

what is a date?
A **DATE** is the term sex workers use to describe a meeting with a person for the purpose of sex for money.

what is a bad date?
A **BAD DATE** is someone who has been abusive towards a sex worker. This could include threatening behaviour, robbery, physical assaults, verbal and emotional abuse, confinement, and sexual assault.

There are several bad date books produced in Canada which seek to document these "bad dates" in order to create a safer work environment for sex workers. In Toronto, the **BAD DATE COALITION** produces one such book.

Encourage sex workers to be responsible for their own safety as well. Regularly let sex workers know that sex workers, as professionals and as humans, are deserving of an environment free of harassment, in which they can feel safe and healthy.

It may be safer for sex workers to work out of their own apartment or in a trusted escort agency. Don't restrict access to websites such as craigslist, redzone and others as these websites can provide a safer alternative to street sex work.

PROVIDE SERVICES IN A NON-JUDGEMENTAL WAY

Provide services in a non-judgemental way. For example, do not automatically assume that sex workers wish, or are feasibly able, to leave sex work. Sex workers should not be slotted into a victim role by default. It makes sense to encourage safety in the sex trade, rather than to simply discourage people from sex work.

When sex workers are expected to leave the trade before they can receive services they are forced to lie about their work. This makes sex workers less safe. Alienating attitudes do little to effect substantive change; instead start where people are and listen to them when they tell you in which direction they would like to head.

> *I was a street walker, a sex worker in (an) area which is a very very dangerous area and I did that job for a couple of years and I was out there all alone. And then I saw the safer stroll project and it just touched, it hit a note with me because I knew that there were safety aspects not being addressed, I knew that it was very scary for the girls out there, and I just wanted to be a part of something that I believed in...*

In shelter settings, staff should allow for flexibility when it comes to requiring that a client calls in for being late. Where possible, work out when the sex worker will be back from work before they leave to work for the night. Otherwise, understand that sex workers may not always be able to safely call to state that they will be coming late to the shelter. Calling from a john's number can be a safety risk since the number can easily be traced and since the sex worker must give their real name to the shelter which they are calling.

Agencies are required to document the services they provide and to whom they provide such services. However, be aware of the way in which your service documentation can be unsafe (and indeed, oppressive) for sex workers. For example, shelter staff should not write in a resident's file that they are involved in sex work, since if these files are subpoenaed (for immigration and refugee hearings, child custody cases, etc) this could cause harm to the sex worker. A better idea would be to write that a woman works independently or at night.

CONSIDER PRACTICAL NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Provide harm reduction supplies, condoms and provide health check-ups and health support through referrals or through on site medical staff. Make sure that health care is provided in a way which is easy to access, hassle-free and ongoing, wherever possible.

Extend hours of services for sex workers. Many sex workers work late hours (9PM – 6AM) and ideally services would be available 24 hours a day. Similarly sex workers living in shelters should be allowed to sleep in during the day, and should not experience consequences or restrictions as a result of their late work hours. Shelters should follow section 4.2 of the City of Toronto Shelter Standards (or similar standards in your location).

TO RECAP: BEST PRACTICES

- Create a drop in space specifically for sex workers
- Make sure the space is friendly and engaging
- Encourage a sex positive space
- Make sure that sex workers are safe and that sex workers can create their own safety
- Have sex workers outreach to other sex workers
- Help sex workers fill in bad date reports and create an environment in which these can filled in that is safe, confidential, and supported
- Educate sex workers on how to fill in a bad date report and to understand how the "Bad Date Book" works, so that they can teach other sex workers about both in their communities.
- Provide harm reduction supplies and health care or referrals to health care services
- Extend hours where possible to better suit sex workers requirements
- Continuously have sex workers involved with, working for, and engaging in change efforts

Section 4.2 of the Toronto Shelter Act states:

"In the single adult and youth emergency shelter system, beds must not be held after curfew unless the resident has made prior arrangements with staff and received permission to be late due to shift work (examples of shift work include persons working at a factory, restaurant or sex trade industry), cultural, religious, or family obligations."

LOOK HERE: Bad Date Reports

Tips on how to take a "Bad Date Report" can be found on **pages 36-37**, while a "Bad Date Report" can be found on **page 40**. To see what a "Emergency Response Plan Form" looks like please see **pages 41-42**.

WORKSHOPS!

workshops for a safer stroll project

You will find a list of workshops that you could use in a safer stroll project in this section of the manual. Example workshops can also be found in this section.

TOPIC	REASON FOR TOPIC
Introductions	To allow people to get to know each other and to be introduced to the group, as well as to provide feedback on how the group should be run.
What is sex work?	To recognize what sex work is and different types of sexual services (oral, vocal stimulation / dirty talk, intercourse, manual stimulation, visual stimulation such as stripping, etc) and payments (money, drugs, payment of bills or expenses)
Harm reduction and sex work: Safety strategies	To discuss what is meant by the term "harm reduction". What is the framework and what relevance does it have to the people in a safer stroll outreach project?
Communication	To create an environment in which participants feel that they can communicate easily, but also to develop crucial listening skills that can be transferred to other venues.
Healthy relationships	To identify the characteristics of a healthy and unhealthy relationship
Conflict resolution	To train participants in skills used to defuse hostility and to de-escalate conflict and other difficult situations

"This has really made me more confident in my dream to use my experiences and hope to help others."

TOPIC	REASON FOR TOPIC
First aid	To instruct participants on basic first aid including overdose prevention, what do when a friend is having an overdose, wounds and injuries
HIV / AIDS and Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)	To ensure that participants are knowledgeable about HIV / AIDS and HCV in order to educate themselves and discuss ways to reduce possible risks. Additionally, these infections deserve special attention since their prevalence is high in comparison to other STIs.
Safer sex and sexually transmitted infections	To educate participants about STIs and the transmission of STIs, through all forms of sexual activity including intercourse, and to discuss contraceptive options
Alternatives to intercourse	To discuss sexual services such as outercourse which can be safer than intercourse
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identities	To discuss the specific issues people who are LGBT may face as sex workers. Issues discussed could include coming out, rejection from parents and peers, additional barriers to services and providing supports and referrals.
Youth and sex work	What are the complications of being young and being a sex worker? What are the difficulties of being under 16 years of age and being a sex worker? What are the difficulties in accessing services for those who are 16-24 years old, or for those under 16 years?

> *"It has changed habits within the sex trade for sure. And it has made me self-confident and to work and get out of the sex trade…I'm in a much more safer place these days and I have 100% more support in my life than I had two years ago."*

Girlfriend experience (GFD): A sex worker who is paid to play the role of the clients' girlfriend, and may include kissing, cuddling, and foreplay without protection

TOPIC	REASON FOR TOPIC
Anti-racism and anti-oppression	To discuss the implications of racism, both subtle and overt, that continue to oppress people of colour. What is white privilege, who holds power and what is oppression? Also, what are the effects of racism, sexism, classism, transphobia, ableism and many other oppressions for those working in the sex trade?
Self care and self esteem	To ensure that people in a safer stroll outreach project have outlets for healthy self-care. Also, to provide a space to speak about and hopefully improve self-esteem.
Stigma	To address the stigma that sex workers face with their peer groups, friends, family, and communities.
Self defense	To teach participants the skills they need to defend themselves against violent clients including how defend oneself while in a car and how to escape from an attacker
Developing a sex work safety plan	To aid participants in developing a safety plan for sex work and to have participants fill in an "Emergency Response Sheet" if they have not filled in one already
Working independently	To offer the possibility that sex workers can work without pimps. To promote the possibility that sex workers can work by themselves in a safe way.

"And for me, I've changed dramatically. In a positive way in all areas. I'm a better person for this group. I'm a better person, I'm a better listener."

who are sex workers?

what exactly is sex work?

The purpose of this workshop is to address the complexity of sex work, to describe the health implications of sex work, to explore participants' personal beliefs, and to examine their attitudes regarding sex workers and sex work. The first part of the workshop will be used to facilitate discussion. Afterwards, you will find some brief details about sex work which can be used to facilitate the discussion.

MATERIALS

Chart paper
Markers
Post-it notes

STEPS

Participants get into groups of two along with one facilitator each.

Flip chart sheets of paper are distributed to each group so that the groups can brainstorm and record their answer to this question:

What do you think of when you hear the words "Sex work"?

Participants should think about their own perceptions as well as those of society.

The groups will have 10 or 15 minutes to brainstorm and then will come back to the larger group to discuss what they came up with.

The facilitators will then guide a discussion of these ideas:

Who is doing sex work?
What is it?
Where are people doing it?
Why are people doing it?

The facilitator can record these points on the flip chart.

> *"The Safer Stroll Outreach Project helped me to be more confident about myself. Now, I'm not afraid to try to live my dreams, and the facilitators are really supportive. I can see where my experiences on the street can benefit a lot of my sisters & brothers who are still 'out there." The Street Angel is who I have become thanks to the Safer Stroll Outreach Project."*

stigma and sex work

Stigma is different from discrimination. Someone is stigmatized when they are labelled as inferior because of an attribute they have. Stigma can lead to discriminatory and oppressive actions, words and attitudes. Sex workers face significant stigma and oppression in the communities in which they live, from the general population and sometimes from their family. For this reason, it is important to understand stigma and to minimize or eliminate it in your agency setting.

internalized stigma:

self-hatred, shame, and self-blaming in which people feel they are being judged by others and therefore isolate themselves

externalized stigma:

*also known as **ENACTED STIGMA** which results in **DISCRIMINATION**, this type of stigma is the stigma that people, the community and society have for sex work. This stigma is manifested in perceptions, feelings, or actions towards sex work and sex workers*

> *...I'm more patient with myself...I'm not pushing myself, I'm not comparing myself to others and their progress. I'm just going along at my pace and I'm not down on myself anymore cause I made it through.*

The main causes of stigma include:

insufficient knowledge, false beliefs, and fears about sex work and sex workers, moral judgements about people who do sex work, fears about sex workers being responsible for all disease transmission, the lack of recognition of stigma

The main forms of stigma include:

physical and social isolation from family, friends, and the larger community, gossip, name calling, and condemnation, loss of rights and decision-making power

Other forms of stigma include:

self-stigma; sex workers blaming and isolating themselves (which is reinforced by external stigma), stigma by association, (friends and family members of sex workers feel affected by stigma), stigmatization of sex work as a possibility as an occupation or a choice, general feelings and attitudes that sex work always means victimhood for those who engage in it

The effects of stigma include:

being kicked out of the family, home, rented accommodation, organization, depression, suicide, substance use, not accessing social services, social withdrawal, not taking advantage of opportunities

Potential Workshop About Stigma in Sex Work:

In a group setting, participants in a safer stroll outreach project training workshop could be asked to discuss together the discussion points below. You can use chart paper to record some of the points.

- What do you like about sex work or being a sex worker?
- What do you not like about sex work or being a sex worker?
- On the chart paper, compare the positive and negative qualities of sex work and add an additional two qualities to either of the existing lists.
- Why do you think sex workers / sex work face so much negative stigma?
- How do society's stereotypes of sex workers affect them?
- How do you think that stigma can be stopped?

"I understand their lives and relate to many of their experiences. I know they come to the drop-in for the great work of this project. My focus is on doing great work and not on daily using or being unemployed."

RESOURCES & FORMS!

resource pages for sex workers
safety in sex work

Safety in sex work is an important part of harm reduction strategies for sex workers and should be integrated in any safer stroll outreach project. Safety can be divided into several categories;

What to bring with you to work,

What to wear,

How to be safe while working,

and safer sexuality.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU TO WORK:

- Bring a variety of condoms (flavoured, dry, lubed) and make sure you have enough for the night.
- If you are allergic to latex condoms use polyurethane condoms (such as the Trojan Avanti) or the female condom (such as the Reality condom), as neither contain latex.
- Carry enough water-based or silicon-based lube for the night.
- Use rubber gloves or liquid band-aids for giving hand-jobs.
- If you have a cell phone or can borrow one, try to bring it with you when working
- If you don't have access to a cell phone, then carry change or a phonecard with you for payphones. Learn where the payphones are located in the area you are working. If you feel comfortable calling 911, remember that you can call 911 for free on payphones.
- Take with you a small phone book or piece of paper with emergency contact numbers. Numbers could include a rape crisis centre, shelter, the bad date line, and a friend's number). Or program these numbers in your cellphone.
- Carry a pencil and a small pad of paper. Use this to write down license plate numbers, the location of where you will be, and other important information.
- Avoid taking money, valuables, or ID (other than your health card) with you when you work. These can be stolen by a client or forgotten. You should have your health card if you need to go to the hospital.
- Try to avoid drug or alcohol use while working but if you do use then be sure to use new drug use equipment whenever possible.
- Carry something that can be used as a weapon like hair spray (for the eyes), or keys.

WHAT TO WEAR:

- Make sure you can see – if you have contacts or glasses be sure to ***WEAR THEM***
- Try to wear clothing that you don't have to take off to fuck. Or wear clothing that can be put on quickly. This is important since it will allow you to leave in a hurry or if you have to run away.
- Wear shoes that are comfortable and that you are able to run in.
- Avoid necklaces, hand bags with large straps, or scarves as these could be used to choke you.

resource pages for sex workers
safety in sex work

HOW TO BE SAFER WHILE WORKING:

- Try to work in a well lit area with a pay phone nearby.
- If you can, work with a friend or with a group of people.
- Run **AGAINST** traffic, not with it.
- Make sure a friend knows where you are going and who you are going with; they should know your phone number, and full name, and when you leave with a john tell them where you are going with the john and have them take down the license of the car you leave with. You can also leave a message on the Bad Date Line in Toronto (416-765-6009). Be sure to call back after the date to ensure that you are okay.
- If you don't have a friend around, make the client think that you are saying something to the closest person around.
- Let the client know that you told someone where you will be (even if you didn't).
- Cautiously approach a client's car, leaving enough distance between you and the car to avoid being grabbed.
- Pick a hotel or parking lot that you feel safe in.
- Arrange price, location, and service outside of the car.
- Walk around the car to look in it to ensure that the driver is alone and that there is no one in the back of the car.
- Once in the car, make sure that you can easily open the car door and that the handle is working.
- Get your money upfront and stash it somewhere (other than where you usually put it), where the client can see. This way if he does rob you, he won't get all your money.
- Put your purse where you can find it without looking, such as on the floor between your feet.
- Keep your eyes and ears on your client and where your client's hands are.
- If your client doesn't mind, keep the car door slightly open.
- If you go to a client's space then make sure that the door does not have a dead bolt on it.
- Check to see if there is an alternative exit other than the door you came in.
- If you are going to a hotel or your client's place, make sure that once you are in, that you check all of the rooms, including the bathroom, to ensure that nobody is hiding.
- Take a self defense course if possible.
- If you are being attacked then **MAKE NOISE!** Scream, yell, and make a commotion. Somebody might hear and be able to help. Yell **"FIRE"** as this attracts the most attention.
- If you have had a bad date report it to your local "Bad Date Line", so that the information can be passed on to other sex workers.
- Remember to always trust your gut.

resource pages for sex workers
safety in sex work

SAFER SEXUALITY:

- It is safer to give then to receive, it gives you more control over the situation.
- Bring your own condoms and always use them, even with oral sex.
- Use a dental dam when receiving oral from a client. If you don't have a dental dam then you can use a male condom cut lengthwise spread over your vagina or anus.
- If you're having vaginal or anal sex make sure you lube the condom, and/or any of your body parts that may be penetrated and between your thighs with a lot of water based lube. This will avoid friction, which can produce tears in your skin, which can be entry points for infection.
- Try to be aware of cuts or scratches on your body. Cover them up with band aids and avoid contact with fluids such as cum, blood, etc.
- Pay attention to the state of your hands if you do not use a condom to jack off your client. Remember an entry wound can be invisible to the eye.
- Do not brush your teeth or floss between clients as it can make you more susceptible to infection during oral sex. Chew gum if you need to freshen up between clients.
- Do not douche or use enemas between clients as it can promote tears in your vagina or anus.
- TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS, do not be afraid to turn a client down.

EMOTIONAL SAFETY:

- Know your limits and stick to them.
- Let your client know what you are willing and not willing to do. This may prevent you from feeling violated or harassed.
- Have someone to confide in and to share experiences with; make sure it is someone that will not use it against you or who will be judgemental.
- Be involved in projects and support groups such as Safer Stroll Outreach projects.

> *"The whole training projects were effective even in my own life — very enriching for my lifestyle. I also know I can go to any teachers, trainers, or any of our supports if I ever feel I need further information that wasn't provided to us in our project."*

taking a bad date report

A bad date is a term describing someone who abused or abuses a sex worker. This can include rape, sexual assault, physical assault, threats, verbal abuse, robbery, refusal to pay or use a condom, etc.

Taking down (or hearing about) a Bad Date (such as rape, sexual assault, physical assault, etc) can be challenging and difficult. It is sometimes hard to know how to respond, or be supportive. Below is a list of some important things to keep in mind when talking with a person who has experienced a Bad Date.

ALLOW the person giving the Bad Date report to choose the location and time of the report. Give them the choice of writing out the report themselves.

BELIEVE the person making the report. It can be extremely difficult to disclose a bad date, (or even admitting to engaging in sex work), especially if the person doesn't believe it.

LISTEN to the person's story. Allow the person reporting the Bad Date to talk, cry, scream, or rant. Sometimes the hardest, but most effective thing a person can do is listen without judgment. Our natural urge is to offer advice or solutions, but the best thing to do is listen and provide support.

LOOK HERE: To see an example of a "Bad Date Report Form" and "Emergency Response Plan for People Involved in Sex Work Form" please see **pages 40-42**.

DON'T JUDGE OR BLAME the person for either what happened or for their involvement in sex work. People who have suffered a Bad Date experience a roller coaster of emotions that can range from sadness, self blame, frustration, to hatred. Sometimes a person who has experienced a Bad Date will act as though nothing is wrong. Some people believe that as long as they do not admit what has happened, nothing occurred, or that a Bad Date is "part of the job". This is a common reaction. It is difficult for someone to comprehend that someone took control over them and made them a victim. What they need to understand is that a Bad Date is **NEVER** the fault of the sex worker, or a result of their choice to enter sex work.

PROVIDE OPTIONS that help them decide what they want to do, but refrain from telling them what you think is best. Since everyone reacts differently to trauma, each person must decide whether going to the police, the hospital, calling the Bad Date Line, and/or receiving counseling is a good solution for them. Your responsibly as a support person is to discuss these options with them.

BE AWARE OF DENIAL which is common after someone experiences a Bad Date. One of the natural ways for a mind to cope is to block out certain memories to protect oneself. Don't get angry with the person if they cannot remember specific details of the Bad Date. The person who experienced the Bad Date has been traumatized and it is your duty to be supportive and help the person make a report, and/or sort out what happened.

BE SENSITIVE to the language you use when talking to a person who has experienced a Bad Date. Language is extremely important when speaking with someone shortly after they have experienced a Bad Date. Many people are uncomfortable with words like rape or sexual assault. Use the same terminology that the person making the report uses.

ASSURE THEM that the Bad Date was **NOT THEIR FAULT.**

RESPECT the person's confidentiality. Do not disclose to other people who made the Bad Date Report, or any other information that would identify who the person is.

PROVIDE REFERRALS to places in Toronto that might be able to help the person, such as the Bad Date Coalition, Rape Crisis Line, or Special Victims Unit of the police.

WORDS OF WOMEN: Dealing with Stress

"There is lots of ways to cope with stress. Here are a few ways that I've learnt [that I] think would help you. If you stop and think, just for a minute why you [are] stressed out, calm down, and let your brain relax. It gives you time to wonder why you're stressed, then you can deal with it.

Here's one I think you will like: If your near a forest or bushes, make sure no one can hear you and just yell, and scream your head off, and if you start crying, then you know its working. You can feel the tension leave your body.

After, you try everything else and you are still stressed out, then you should talk to somebody like: a friend, a relative, teacher, doctor, or counsellor to help you recognize and deal with your stress. Its okay to talk about how you feel because if you don't its not good for you and its not good for others."

sex work and the law

A major challenge that sex workers face in Canada and in the local communities in which they live is with the law and sex work. Specifically, there are four laws which prevent sex workers from working, even though, technically "prostitution" is legal in Canada.

There are four laws in the criminal code that make it, in all practical ways, impossible to engage in sex work legally. They are as follows:

CRIMINAL CODE 210 BAWDY HOUSE LAWS

- Landlords may not rent to people they know or assume to be sex workers
- Sex workers cannot work in an environment that they feel safe in
- Sex workers must go their client's place because of this law and cannot engage in sex work in the safety of their own home
- Due to the Bawdy House Laws sex workers can be evicted from their homes if it is assumed that they are providing commercial sexual services in their home. This is called "Form N9"
- Police may charge the sex worker with bawdy house offences if he or she reports an assault on them.
- Sex workers can have their bank accounts and assets seized as proceeds of crime
- This law makes it illegal to set up a "safe house" for sex workers.

> *I like us all getting together because I like all the feedback we shared as a group. It's very helpful.*

CRIMINAL CODE 211 TRANSPORTING SOMEONE TO A BAWDY HOUSE

- Sex workers are unable to hire a driver
- Sex workers cannot suggest a bawdy house, as a way to get off the streets, to other sex workers
- Sex workers cannot take their clients to their home or to an established in-call service

sex work and the law

CRIMINAL CODE 212 PROCURING

- This law makes it illegal for sex workers to show new sex workers or people who want to be in the sex trade how to work safely
- This law prevents a sex worker from having someone stay with them; such as a friend or partner
- Sex workers cannot introduce other sex workers to safe clients
- Sex workers cannot ask another sex worker to see a client with them or to work with them
- Essentially, this law makes it illegal for a sex worker to have a roommate, partner, or anyone that they see on a regular basis

"Sex workers are more vulnerable to sexual assault and other violence when they work illegally as they perceive that police do not take crimes against them seriously and clients are aware of the propensity for sex workers not to report crimes of violence to the police."

Banach L. (1999). Sex workers and the official neglect of occupational health and safety. Social Alternatives. 18(3): 17-22.

CRIMINAL CODE 213 COMMUNICATING FOR THE PURPOSES OF PROSTITUTION

- Sex workers cannot negotiate services with a client in public
- Sex workers cannot provide sexual services in a car
- Sex workers cannot look for clients using safer measures such as a phone chatline, the Internet, using a cell phone or public pay phone

resource pages for sex workers
bad date report form

DATE of INCIDENT:	TIME:
DID THE INCIDENT OCCUR ON THE STREET? YES [ ] or NO [ ]	WHILE WORKING IN-CALL: YES [ ] or NO [ ]
or WHILE WORKING OUT-CALL? YES [ ] or NO [ ] ***DESCRIPTION OF DATE:***	
MAKE YOUR BEST GUESS WHEN NEEDED	
NAME or ALIAS:	
RACE:	AGE:
HEIGHT:	WEIGHT / BUILD:
EYE COLOUR:	HAIR COLOUR:
HAIR LENGTH AND STYLE (CURLY, STRAIGHT, ETC):	
FACIAL HAIR (SIDEBURNS, GOATEE, BEARD):	
DISTINGUISING FEATURES:	
PICK UP LOCATION:	
DESCRIPTION of WHAT THE DATE SAID AND DID:	

resource pages for sex workers

Emergency Response Plan for People Involved in Sex Work

The Emergency Response Plan Sheet is a safety strategy to help people involved in sex work plan what should happen if they go missing (i.e. are being held somewhere against their will, get arrested, or are hospitalized). Participants should think about who they want contacted and who will help them to take care of any responsibilities they have (i.e. paying rent, taking care of pets etc). Participants can also indicate if they want a Missing Persons Report filed.

Legal Name: _____

Street Name: _____

Birth Date: _____

Address / Phone _____

If you don't have an address, give information about where you stay sometimes (i.e. shelter, friend, family)

I, _____ (NAME OF PARTICIPANT), give consent for staff at _____(AGENCY NAME) to contact the contacts I've listed in this document.

This contract is valid from _____ (start date) to _____ (end date).

Signature of Service User: _____

Signature of Staff: _____

Date: _____

If ARRESTED, you can contact the following agencies by calling COLLECT:

WEST DOWNTOWN:
Parkdale Community Health Centre
416-537-2477

DOWNTOWN:
Queen West Community Health Centre
416-703-8480

Street Outreach Services (SOS) – for youth
416-926-0744

Fred Victor Centre
416-364-8228

EAST DOWNTOWN:
South Riverdale Community Health Centre
COUNTERfit Harm Reduction Program
Women's Harm Reduction Health Promoter,
416-461-1925 ext. 232
COUNTERfit Harm Reduction Drop In: 416-461-1925 ext. 235

Street Health
416-921-8668 ext. 250

resource pages for sex workers

If staff at _____, (AGENCY NAME) have not seen me in 5 days, I give them consent to: (please check what you want staff to do and the order you want them to do it in):

☐ (__#) Contact the people listed below (include whoever is appropriate, for example: family / children, landlord, doctor, worker etc)

☐ (__#) File a Missing Person Report with the Toronto Police

Priority (Order to contact People)	**Name**	**Relationship**	**Contact Info**	**Details** (I.e. What to do, whether its okay to leave a message or not, specific times to call / not call and instructions about what to do)

Other Special Instructions (List any other important information. Use the back if additional space is needed):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

This Emergency Response Plan Sheet is in accordance with the Privacy of Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (Schedule A, Part IV, Section 40).

© 2010
a project of
street health
and regent park
community health
centre