

SURREY VULNERABLE

WOMEN

AND

GIRLS

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES
AND SUPPORTING CHANGE

PROGRESS REPORT: 2013-2019

About the Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group

The Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls (SVWG) Working Group formed in 2013 in response to the brutal murder of Janice Shore on the street in Whalley. The purpose of the SVWG Working Group is to collaboratively understand the challenges and needs of vulnerable females in Surrey and find workable solutions.

The following organizations are represented on the SVWG Working Group:

- Atira Women's Resource Society
- BC Housing
- City of Surrey – Community Safety & Social Planning
- Community Living BC
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- John Howard Society of the Lower Mainland
- Lookout Housing and Health Society
- Nightshift Ministries
- Options Community Services
- Pacific Community Resources Society
- Surrey RCMP
- Surrey Women's Centre
- YWCA

SVWG Executive Committee

- Bonnie Moriarty, Co-Chair, Elizabeth Fry Society
- Michelle Shaw, Co-Chair, Pacific Community Resources Society
- Shahnaz Rahman, Surrey Women's Centre
- Aileen Murphy, City of Surrey, Social Planning
- Kristin Patten, City of Surrey, Social Planning
- Sarah Louie, Atira Women's Resources
- Colleen Kerr, City of Surrey, Community Safety
- Tammi Harrison, Administrative Support, Pacific Community Resources Society

SVWG Reports

- In Their Own Words (2015)
- Briefing Note: Using a Gender Lens to Understand the Current Homeless Crisis in Surrey (2016)
- I never thought it would happen to me: Opioid Dialogues with Women and Girls in Surrey (2018)
- Surviving the Night: Report on the Night-time Safety and Service Needs of Vulnerable Women and Girls in Surrey (2019)

Acknowledgments

- Michelle Ninow, M. Ninow Consulting, prepared the report for the SVWG Working Group.
- Funding of SVWG initiatives in 2013-2019 includes:
 - BC Ministry of Justice
 - BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
 - City of Surrey Council Initiatives Grant
 - Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society

For more information on SVWG visit: surrey.ca/socialplanning

Table of Contents

2	Message
3	Introduction
5	Section 1: About
7	Section 2: Actions
13	Section 3: Learnings
19	Section 4: Changes

Message

Message from the Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls Executive Committee

Janice Shore brought us together. Her tragic, violent death on the streets of Surrey shocked us, saddened us, and compelled us to act. We knew that there were other highly vulnerable women and girls in Surrey who were at risk. We were concerned about the lack of understanding of their unique needs and appropriate services available to support them. In 2013 we responded by forming the Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group.

This progress report highlights the activities of the SVWG Working Group over the past six years. In this time, we have regularly convened the agencies that provide services to street-engaged women and girls to promote information sharing and collaboration. We have undertaken research, conducted community forums and done projects. All our work has been grounded in what we have heard directly from women and girls in Surrey who are struggling with homelessness, mental illness, addictions, violence and trauma.

We are proud of our accomplishments. With small project grants we have shed light on the needs of vulnerable women and girls. Women who generally live on the margins of our community have had their voices heard and amplified. We are especially pleased with the mobile service van that was secured as a result of the support and advocacy of the SVWG Working Group.

We thank the funders who have supported our work. The SVWG Working Group did not come together based on a funding opportunity but rather a shared commitment to making a positive change. We appreciate the funders who have responded to this community-driven priority and supported our initiatives.

We thank Michelle Ninow, the social planning consultant who has facilitated the SVWG Working Group since its inception. Michelle has also conducted all of our research projects, including engaging vulnerable women in these efforts. Michelle's expertise, along with her passion and commitment to social justice and gender equity, has been invaluable.

We thank the women and girls who have bravely shared their stories and suggestions for change with us. Our work would not be possible without them.

We acknowledge that there have been some notable improvements in service provision for vulnerable women and girls in Surrey. However, there is much that still needs to be done.

In 2020, the SVWG will be undertaking a process to create a Strategic Plan and identify key actions moving forward. The key issues documented in this Progress Report will help inform the strategic planning process and key priorities. We remain committed to addressing the most urgent priorities identified by vulnerable women and girls in Surrey.

Introduction

The SVWG Working Group seeks to better understand the daily reality of vulnerable females in Surrey, and advocate for improved policies and services to better meet their needs. Since it began six years ago, the Working Group has undertaken a range of activities including:

- Commissioning research;
- Hosting community leaders' forums;
- Leading collaborative planning processes;
- Supporting service providers and community agencies; and
- Engaging in community action.

The aim of this document is to provide a progress report on these activities and the learnings they provide.

- Section 1: About - provides an overview of the SVWG;
- Section 2: Actions - provides descriptions of the Working Group's initiatives;
- Section 3: Learnings - presents the central themes and learnings which have emerged from the projects; and
- Section 4 - Changes - lists the positive changes in the community over the past six years for vulnerable women and girls.

Who They Are:

Vulnerable women & girls are those who identify as female and have experienced or are experiencing a combination of the following:

- Homelessness
- Survival sex work
- Mental illness or untreated trauma
- Substance use
- Poverty
- Domestic violence (intimate partner or familial)
- Incarceration or institutionalization



About

The SVWG Working Group is a collaborative group of representatives from non-profit and government agencies that serve or have an interest in vulnerable women and girls in Surrey.

The group came together following the traumatic death of a Surrey woman, who experienced a number of vulnerabilities and challenges in her life. Community leaders realized they needed to work together to better understand her situation and what could have prevented her death, so that such senseless deaths could be avoided in our community in the future.

The SVWG Working Group does not provide services, rather it works with the social service sector in Surrey to identify needs and advocate for resources for vulnerable women and girls in the community. The Working Group provides an opportunity for service providers to share their learnings and observations of emerging trends and changes, and to identify the most urgent priorities for action. It shares this collective knowledge with community leaders and decision makers to help improve the response to the needs of vulnerable women and girls in Surrey.

Identifying the Unique Needs of Females

One of the central goals of the SVWG Working Group is to develop a better understanding of the unique needs of vulnerable females in Surrey. Vulnerable women and girls learn to stay safe on the street by not being highly visible in the community; however, due to the hidden nature of their lives and their often nocturnal routines, the needs and concerns of vulnerable females are often overlooked, even within the social service sector.

Guiding Methodology – a Focus on Lived Experience

Since its inception, the SVWG Working Group has sought input from women and girls with lived experience for all of its initiatives. This has usually been accomplished through focus groups and individual interviews. Local service providers have played an essential role in identifying and facilitating contact with women with lived experience.

The ideas and feedback from women and girls with lived experience have helped the Working Group to ground its actions in reality. It has also provided the women and girls with an opportunity to make their voices heard by political decision makers and service providers.

2

Actions

This section provides brief descriptions of the key initiatives undertaken by the SVWG Working Group over the past six years.



**“In Their Own Words” Research Project
(2014/2015)**

Funded by the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society.

When the SVWG Working Group first convened, it found very little available information on vulnerable women and girls in Surrey. To address this gap, the group initiated a research project. This research resulted in a wealth of local information and ideas stemming from interviews and focus groups with 50 women and female youth with lived experience.

The final report, *In Their Own Words*, provides an assessment of services and needs of vulnerable women and youth in Surrey. These research findings continue to actively inform activities and priorities of the SVWG.

**Collaborative Planning Project:
Improving the Safety of Street
Engaged Women and Female Youth
(2015)**

Funded by the Ministry of Justice through a Civil Forfeiture Grant.

This project used a collaborative planning approach, engaging people with lived experience and key stakeholders in a workshop series to identify priorities for action for addressing the challenges raised in the *In Their Own Words* research.

Approximately 30 representatives from government and the social service sector were brought together for three workshops. The planning process was informed by a Reference Group of vulnerable women with lived experience who provided their perspectives and ideas. The planning workshops built upon the *In Their Own Words* report by identifying priority services to address the challenges identified in the research.

The priorities identified through the workshop series guided the actions of the SVWG Working Group over the following years. For example, one identified priority was the need for a mobile service van. In follow-up, the SVWG Working Group supported the Surrey Women’s Centre to secure funding to launch a mobile van providing services to street-engaged women overnight (the SMART van). The SVWG Working Group also brought in Living in Community to provide training to address stigma experienced by sex workers. As well, identifying key community priorities was critical for nonprofit agencies to ‘make the case’ in funding applications.

Using a Gendered Lens to Understand Female Homelessness

(2016)

Funded by the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society.

In 2016, service providers started noticing that there were an increasing number of women living on the streets in Surrey. The Gendered Homelessness project was initiated to better understand this trend, and the specific needs of women experiencing homelessness.

The SVWG Working Group commissioned research, conducting interviews with outreach workers and shelter managers. The research findings were presented at a workshop attended by 35 community and government representatives. The research and workshop findings were compiled into a Briefing Document: Using a Gendered Lens to Understand Homelessness in Surrey. The document has been used to advocate for services.

Opioid Dialogues

(2017/2018)

Funding provided by the Centre for Substance Use Research (CISUR) at the University of Victoria (Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General).

As is happening across BC, Surrey has been experiencing a crisis in illicit drug overdose deaths linked to opioids. Surrey has consistently seen the second highest number of overdose deaths in BC. Although women represent a small proportion of illicit drug overdose deaths, vulnerable females face unique challenges and have needs that are currently not being well met.

In 2017, the SVWG Working Group received funding to initiate community dialogue about substance use and the opioid crisis in Surrey. Four focus groups were held with women and girls who were at various stages of active substance use and recovery. Key findings and recommendations were presented in a report entitled "I Never Thought It Would Happen To Me: Opioid Dialogues with Women and Girls in Surrey."

The Dialogues report has been shared with policy and decision makers at SVWG forums and key bodies such as the Surrey Community Action Team on Opioid Overdose Response and the City of Surrey Social Equity and Diversity Committee.

**Leader’s Forums on Vulnerable Women and Girls
(2018 & 2019)**

Funding provided by Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society (2018) and the City of Surrey (2019).

The SWWG Working Group started holding an annual Leader’s Forum in 2018. The Forums bring together community and provincial leaders to focus on issues of vulnerable women and girls and highlight both the unique gender-specific issues and the unique context of Surrey.

Topics at the 2018 and 2019 forums included the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, the Opioid Dialogues report, service provision for vulnerable women and girls in Surrey, housing research, and the night-time needs of vulnerable women and girls in Surrey.

The Forums have provided an opportunity to share the SWWG’s research findings and identify emerging issues that need action through discussion among service providers and with decision-makers.

**Service Provider Collaboration and Learning
(2016-2019)**

The SWWG Working Group meets regularly. Since the inception, one of the most important outcomes has been the degree to which service providers in the non-profit and government sectors have collaborated and shared information.

Working Group members have also enthusiastically engaged in learning opportunities such as the training about anti-stigma for sex workers provided by Living in Community and an information session about indoor sex work provided by SWAN Vancouver Society in 2016.

Community Action (2016-2019)

Funding for the Surrey Women's Resource Card was provided by the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society and funding for the care packages was provided through a City of Surrey Community Grant and community donations.

While the SVWG Working Group does not provide direct service to vulnerable women and girls, members occasionally participate in projects which have a direct impact in the community. Examples of this community action include the development of a Surrey Women's Resource Card and the creation and distribution of care packages for vulnerable women and girls on International Women's Day in 2018.

3

Learnings

The work of the SWWG Working Group has resulted in a substantial set of learnings gathered from vulnerable women and youth and service providers in Surrey through research and participation in workshops and forums. Learnings include key challenges or barriers experienced by vulnerable women and girls, as well as gaps in service. The key themes are presented in this section with the intention of informing planning and service response in the community.

Staying Safe on the Street

Women with lived experience report that staying safe on the streets in Surrey can be challenging. Women report that at night-time they feel safest in the areas where they spent the most time and less safe in neighbourhoods that they did not know as well. Their feelings of safety outside at night were influenced by lighting; they tend to stay away from unlit places like back lanes and parks at night. Some respondents talked about staying away from the places where they have had bad experiences such as being attacked and assaulted. And while they said it felt safer to be outside around other people, they did talk about trying to stay away from people they identified as “drug dealers, volatile people, and gang members.” Survival tactics include staying in areas that you know well, having a low profile, and knowing other people on the street.

The women identified that safe, female- only drop-ins are urgently needed for women and youth, especially at night-time in Surrey. Access to free emergency cell phones and more outreach workers and police officers who have received training on how to work

with vulnerable women and youth on the street are needed to improve street safety.

I was sliced up and left for dead on the street – I survived and that started a slow journey of recovery for me. I am clean most of the time now and I am giving back – I like to help others.

Source: Focus Group Participant, 2014

Facing Constant Stigma

One of the most prevalent barriers identified by vulnerable women and girls is how they are perceived and treated by professionals in the community such as doctors, nurses, emergency responders, RCMP, and government ministry workers. Many women and girls talked about feeling judged, talked down to, and discredited when they were seeking assistance. They talked of experiencing bullying, disrespect, leering, and a lack of compassion by staff in a wide range of Surrey organizations. In some cases, they were denied what most people would consider essential service, because of who they were perceived to be.

The women attributed the poor treatment by service providers to a lack of training and experience working with the street-engaged population. They also felt that the service environment is often not designed for people from the street. Involving peer support workers in service delivery would help to address stigma and make vulnerable women and girls feel more comfortable accessing services.

Accessing Service

Women and girls talked about a service system that is bureaucratic and difficult to access and make sense of. They talked about how difficult it is to get the information they need. The women and youth said that having someone to assist them with accessing information and making decisions would be very helpful. Services also need to have a no wrong door approach so vulnerable women and youth are not just turned away from service if they don't fit the right criteria, because they may not return.

Women and girls also talked about the barriers to service that women face that men may not. Women are often caregivers and they have other people in their lives (children, partners, friends, parents) which can complicate the process for accessing service and remaining engaged with the service provider. This aspect of many women's lives needs to be taken into account when services for women are being designed.

Service providers have also reported that women on the street generally have more belongings than men. This can mean that it becomes more difficult to access a service, especially if that service does not have storage available for personal belongings.

Lack of Night-time Services

Vulnerable women and girls may not be able to access services during standard operating hours. Currently there are no services in Surrey which are open all night long. The mobile service vans are only operating until 2am and the RCMP's Mental Health Outreach Team is operational until 1am.

When asked, research participants said that services are needed between 10pm and 5am at a minimum, potentially extending to 7am when possible. The timing may vary depending on the season – with longer availability during the long dark nights in winter. Vulnerable women and girls in Surrey identified the following night-time service needs:

- Access to the mobile service vans every night of the week. Vans should operate all night long (at least until 5am) not just until 2am.
- A Drop-In that is open all night for women only with showers, washrooms, laundry and storage. The drop-in could also provide food, clean clothes, harm reduction supplies and Naloxone, and connections to community services and resources. Women could also potentially access basic medical services. It would also be a safe place to go in a crisis situation.
- Youth also need a safe place to go at night (like a drop in) where they won't get kicked out, and where there are support workers who can help them access community resources.
- More low barrier shelter or drop-in beds for women are needed.
- Night-time outreach workers who are trained to work with vulnerable women and girls.

We need more drop-ins for women, like Wabaan for Women, – instead of hiding at night; it's hard when you feel alone.

Source: Survey Participant, 2019

Mental Health

Many of the women who participated in SVWG research talked about their challenges with mental illness and untreated childhood trauma. They also talked about how difficult it has been for them to get mental health services, often waiting years to access service.

While crisis intervention in Surrey seems to be effective, according to vulnerable women and youth and service providers, getting access to services before the crisis point is difficult. The waits for mental health services have typically been long and the intake sessions are complicated and lengthy. Hopefully, with the recent opening of the Urgent Care Centre in Surrey, which offers walk-in mental health and substance use care, these service gaps and challenges will be addressed.

Substance Use

Participants spoke positively about several of the specific substance use services in Surrey that they are using or have used in the past. These services include Elizabeth Fry's Ellendale, the Fraser Health Quibble Creek Sobering Centre and Daytox at Creekside, Phoenix Centre, and AA and NA meetings. Unfortunately waitlists and time lapses in between detox, treatment and recovery services reduce the chances of success for women who are trying to overcome addictions.

Vulnerable women who participated in SVWG research indicated that it can be more difficult for women to connect to substance use services because of their care taking role. They may not want to risk losing their children or stay away from their partner during treatment so they do not access substance use services.

Women who access the Surrey Women's Centre SMART Van have told researchers that the harm reduction supplies they obtain are really important. Sometimes they are available on the street but they are expensive to purchase. They would also like to see access to Opioid Replacement Therapy and Opioid Antagonist Therapy offered at night as well.

Many of the women who participated in the Opioid Dialogues were emphatic that women-only services are essential for making substance use treatment and recovery accessible for many females. They said that there are not enough women-only recovery houses. Women-only services also provide women-only support groups and counselling. The dialogue participants discussed the value of talking with other women in their circumstances - there is an understanding that they share. Some women who are in recovery said that could not have gotten well without a women-only recovery facility.

We need more supportive housing for people coming out of recovery. You are so vulnerable at that point. You need support to integrate back into society.

Source: Focus Group Participant, 2014

Sexual Assault

Vulnerable women and girls have indicated that they do not feel the response to sexual assault is adequate in the community. The reporting process is too complicated, and the stigma involved if the woman is engaged in sex work is still prohibitive. If reporting to the RCMP, the response is dependent upon the values and attitude of the officer involved. There is a significant variation in the RCMP response to vulnerable women and girls reporting sexual assault.

Vulnerable women and girls would like to see more outreach workers who specialize in sexual assault, victimization, and safety planning. The Surrey Women's Centre SMART program is noted for being effective and providing meaningful assistance to women who have experienced sexual assault.

Survival Sex Work

Women are often engaged in survival sex work to meet their basic needs and support their substance use. Women who participated in SVWG research said that on the streets there is often a gendered division of labour to support substance use – men do crime (selling drugs, stealing, and car hopping) and women do sex work. They also said that women experience a heavy mental and emotional impact because of the sex work, not to mention increased risk of violence.

Aside from the mobile service vans operated by Surrey Women's Centre and Atira, there is little support for women engaged in survival sex work. Service providers say that sex work is changing with much of it happening online and then indoors, especially for younger women.

The SVWG Working Group wants to identify ways to support vulnerable women who are involved in online/indoor sex work. Some vulnerable women can be intensely controlled by their pimp or boyfriend; their only chance for a moment to separate and think for themselves may be at a women's only space. There are few such places available in Surrey, and none open at night.

I avoid Whalley and Newton and Scott Road. I've been sexually assaulted in Whalley, followed and chased in Newton. I used to be a sex worker on Scott Road and I have seen a lot of scary things.

Source: Youth Survey Participant, 2019

Housing

Housing is a key need in Surrey for vulnerable women and youth. Women who have stabilized agree that housing is a key component in the successful transition from vulnerability. It bolsters self-esteem to have your own place; it is a mark of success. It is also a difficult piece of the puzzle to sort out. A range of options are needed especially for women who are moving from addiction to sobriety and for those who are living with a mental illness.

More housing for youth is also needed. There is currently one 6-bed safe house for youth (aged 13-18) in Surrey. Service providers who work with sexually exploited youth say that a house for girls and young women exiting exploitation and addiction is needed. It would have wrap around services - counselling and mental health workers - on site.

I need a safe place to sleep – I walk around at night to stay awake.

Source: Survey Participant, 2019

In terms of emergency shelter, vulnerable women and girls often work or are out at night-time. They need drop-in shelter beds during the day to sleep safely. These beds need to be as low barrier as possible.

Women are losing children if they cannot find housing. We need more housing for families – permanent low income (lack of this creates a trauma cycle).

Source: Forum Participant, 2019

Transportation

Vulnerable women and girls are often limited in their ability to move around the city at night. They may not be able to afford public transit; even in a crisis, taxi drivers are often not willing to pick them up. Service providers talk about having to call a taxi for a woman in crisis and be present when the taxi arrives to ensure that the woman is picked up and taken to where she needs to go. More affordable and reliable transportation options are needed at night in Surrey.

Youth Services

Women and girls who participated in SVWG research and service providers identified the following gaps in services for youth: a safe house for youth who are younger (13- 15 years); a house for girls and young women exiting exploitation and addiction with wrap around services - counselling and mental health workers on site; an intervention team (Yankee team) for sexually exploited and at-risk youth in Surrey - with RCMP, youth and trauma counselling, and a nurse involved; and, more focus on communicating with vulnerable youth on social media.

Youth aged 19 to 25 years report often getting caught in the gap between youth and adult services. They say they need additional support to navigate the transition to adulthood.

Indigenous Services

According to women who participated in SVWG research and identified as being Indigenous, having female Indigenous service providers is very important especially when first accessing services.

Participants also spoke of the importance of the cultural component citing the sweat lodge at Cwenengitel and the traditional healing circles at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre as being very helpful. More is needed. Also, more Indigenous staff at mainstream service agencies are needed in Surrey.

Aboriginal women need their own people to talk to – it really makes a difference. It was important for me to have that personal connection with an Aboriginal woman before I could start working on my stuff.

Source: Focus Group Participant, 2014

Hygiene

Accessible women-only showers, laundry, and restrooms are needed. Women and girls who participated in SVWG research also identified the need for free clothing.

Ongoing Support

Peer support groups and individual support from a counsellor, support worker, youth worker or social worker has been essential for most of the research participants, especially youth, who have achieved stability in their lives. Building relationships can start at a drop-in or through outreach and continue on through the healing process. More opportunities to develop these types of supportive relationships are needed.

It is a really great idea to have volunteers with lived experience working in services and facilities for street-engaged women.

Source: Focus Group Participant, 2015

Education and Job Placement

After leaving a street-engaged life and making positive changes women and youth who would like to maintain their newly found stabilization require education, job training and job placement. Low cost options, financial resources, and ongoing support are needed to make education and job training and placement successful options.

Staff Training

For vulnerable women and girls, the training and expertise of social service staff can play a significant role in their decision to access services or not. They report looking for staff who know about all of the resources available in the community, have cross cultural and sensitivity training, know how to manage triggering women with traumatic pasts/PTSD, and who have training in exploitation and know how to recognize it. Above all they look for workers who treat vulnerable women and girls with respect; without this attitude there is little hope of services being accessed.

Workers at non-profit service agencies need access to ongoing opportunities for training. There is a need for training to address stigma and agencies and frontline workers need trauma informed training. It can't be one-time training. There needs to be a systems and cultural change.

4

Changes

Positive Community Changes

While many of the challenges in Surrey identified by vulnerable women and girls remain, the SVWG Working Group has been pleased to see a number of positive changes in the community over the past six years.

The following are examples of the changes they are celebrating:



New Outreach and Drop-in Services

Over the past six years there have been a number of new services that meet the unique needs of vulnerable women and girls. This includes the Surrey Women Centre's SMART Van and Atira's mobile van which both go out several nights a week distributing harm reduction supplies, bad date reports and snacks. They also assist during crisis, such as assaults and extreme weather events, and van workers are building relationships with vulnerable women and girls on the street. Both mobile services have faced funding challenges and struggle to provide consistent service.

Other services of note include Wabaan, a daytime drop-in for Indigenous women and a separate overdose prevention site for women, both developed and operated by Atira. A collaborative effort, the Special Victim's Unit Initiative, is operated through a partnership between the Surrey Women's Centre and the RCMP to provide victims of sexual assault with support services is noteworthy.



Housing

On the housing front, in 2018, Atira opened a 23-unit supportive housing project for women called Little's Place. In addition, the Province's Rapid Response to Homelessness program opened 166 temporary housing units in 2018 (Phase 1) and has a commitment of 250 units of coed modular housing in Surrey in Phase 2. This new high-support housing has provided viable options for women who were formerly staying in the tent encampment on 135A Street. Finally, the Elizabeth Fry Society is developing a new housing complex for women and women with children that will include 40 shelter beds and 42 housing units. The building will also include 15 units for Indigenous female youth that will be operated by the Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association.



Safe Consumption Site

While the opioid crisis continues to kill thousands in the Province, the opening of the Safe Point Consumption site in 2018 has ensured that those who use substances on site will not die of an overdose. It is open from 7:00 am to 1:00 am daily. Women who participated in SVWG research talked about how this site helps them. The women-only drop in overdose prevention site recently opened by Atira provides another safe option for women.



Police Mental Health Outreach Team

Operated by the RCMP, the Surrey Mental Health Outreach Team responds to people who have contact with the police and who are dealing with mental health, homelessness and substance use.



Mental Health and Substance Use Urgent Care Centre

Very recently the Fraser Health Mental Health and Substance Use Urgent Care Centre opened in Surrey. The Urgent Care Centre provides a central point of access for men and women who are experiencing urgent mental health and substance use concerns. The Centre is open 7:30am to 11:30 pm daily.



Bad Date Reporting

One of the key services that the Surrey Women's Centre's SMART van provides is Bad Date Reporting; a bad date is someone who is violent or harmful to sex workers. Van workers collect information from the women who use the van and they submit the reports to WISH in Vancouver which produces and distributes a weekly Red Light Alert. The SMART Van initiated Bad Date Reporting in Surrey.



Recognition of SVWG's Expertise

The expertise and experience of Surrey service providers is being recognized in the region. One of the SVWG Co-chairs served as an expert witness at the Coroner's Inquest into the death of Deanna Desjarlais.

