



SHELTER TRENDS:

Perpetrator Programs

Shelter Trends is a way for Women's Shelters Canada to monitor trends across the VAW shelter/transition house (TH) sector. These simple surveys are emailed to shelters/THs approximately six times a year.

Breaking the cycle of violence is complex, requiring a continuum of supports from prevention to supports for survivors and perpetrators. While the focus of shelters/transition houses (THs) is on women experiencing violence, some women are also seeking assistance for their partner, wanting the abuse to end but not necessarily the relationship. Katreena Scott, an expert witness at the Mass Casualty Commission, noted that if programs are available, perpetrators will reach out for support and change is possible. Unfortunately, like many areas of anti-violence work, there is a lack of funding for intervention programs, particularly those that are longer-term, culturally appropriate, and tailored to individuals.¹

To better understand if VAW shelters/THs feel like they have appropriate programs to refer perpetrators to, we asked the question: **If survivors ask for programs to support or rehabilitate their abusive partners, do you know of programs where they can be referred?**²

A significant percentage (47%) of shelters/THs knew of these programs and did make referrals.

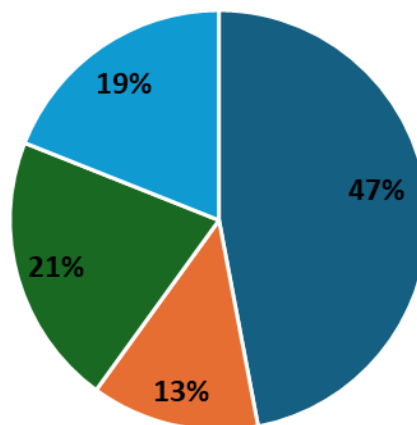
Some executive directors reached out to indicate that they do not refer externally as they operate programs for perpetrators in-house. In Shelter Voices 2023, we heard that 21% of responding shelters/THs operate programming to support perpetrators.³

Beyond this, despite getting requests from survivors, 13% indicated that they were not aware of any of these programs and 21% indicated that there were no appropriate programs for referrals. Somewhat surprisingly, 19% indicated that they do not receive these types of requests.

We know that perpetrator programs are not available in all communities, in particular rural, remote, and northern areas. We have also heard concerns about problematic curriculums and supports that are being offered through these programs, which fail to employ trauma-informed approaches or hold perpetrators accountable for their violence. For these programs to be successful, they need to draw on the expertise and experience of the anti-violence sector and use proven best practices.

Do you know of programs to make referrals for abusers? (n=125)

- Yes, we know these programs, and make referrals
- No, we do not know of these programs, but we get requests from survivors
- No, there are no appropriate programs for referral, but we get requests from survivors
- We do not get these types of requests from survivors



[1] Mass Casualty Commission. (2022) Public Hearing: Volume 63. https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/EN_20220831_PublicHearings_Transcript.pdf?t=1711118079
 [2] The survey was sent to 448 shelters/THs, with a response rate of 29%.
 [3] Women's Shelters Canada. (2023) Shelter Voices: Beyond Walls. <https://endvaw.ca/shelter-voices>