



The Model Practice Guide Project



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The Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses has received funding from Status of Women to conduct the Model Practice Guide project. The Model Practice Guide project (MPG) will create a new toolkit to help women's shelters and transition houses to develop, update and share their own good practice guides that are appropriate for their particular cultures and communities.

A "practice" (or "procedure") is a particular way that people work. Shelters often use practice guides, staff orientation guides, training manuals procedures or policy rules to help shelter workers to maintain a safe and respectful space for women. Practice themes include Principles of Care, Basic Needs of Residents, Inclusivity, and Programming for Residents and Non-Residents, in addition to Governance, Finance and Administration. An ideal practice guide or policy is up-to-date, easy-to follow, and true to the core values of the shelter. The guide should help make the shelter experience easier and better for workers and residents. Sometimes these practice guides are old or incomplete, and it can be difficult for understaffed shelters to find the time to update them. The MPG project is intended to

provide clear step-by-step guidance, relevant examples, and a forum for interaction with other shelters. These supports will make it easier for shelters to create and use good practices.

In October 2014, Heather Stewart was hired as the Knowledge Management and Creation Project Officer for this project. With a background in the non-profit sector and a Master of Arts in Political Science focusing on civil society and policy advocacy, Heather brings practical experience and a passion for consultation to this role. Together with the MPG Advisory Committee, Heather is currently conducting a needs assessment survey with shelters across Canada in order to hear which practice themes are of greatest priority. She is also reviewing the many existing practice guides and manuals to build on the great work of provincial networks and shelters. The MPG team will be developing and testing models in the spring of 2015 for piloting in the summer and fall. The final look and content will depend on what we hear from members! There will be many opportunities for shelters to participate in the project, including focus groups and online feedback. Watch our website at www.endvaw.ca for further updates.

Online Map Of Women's Shelters Across Canada

We are in the process of developing an online map of shelters that provide assistance to women fleeing violence. The objective of the clickable map is to provide a quick and easy resource for women directly impacted by violence as well as for concerned friends, family, employers and employee assistance programs. There is no comparable resource in Canada. The map will include the following information on each of the shelters - their name, their 24 hour emergency line number and their web site. The exact location of the shelters will not be included. Shelters will be located on the map by their postal code.

The web site will be intuitive and will intentionally have limited information. Its primary purpose is facilitating women's access to safety. Keywords associated to the site will seek to ensure that when women are navigating the web for a shelter, they will inevitably come into contact with this site. We plan to launch the site on International Women's Day. All shelters will be sent an email to confirm their consent for their shelter to appear on the map.



The "Up for Debate" Campaign

The Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses is a member of the Up for Debate campaign, an alliance of over 100 women's organizations and their allies from across Canada united in raising awareness about women's rights in the lead up to the 2015 federal election.

Up for Debate calls on all political parties to commit to a federal leaders' debate on issues identified by women – the first in 30 years, and to make meaningful commitments to change women's lives for the better, at home and abroad by ending violence against women, ending women's economic inequality, and supporting women's leadership and organizations. Organizations can join the campaign by contacting info@upfordebate.ca





The Global Network of Women's Shelters (GNWS) is organizing the third World Conference of Women's Shelters from November 3 to 6 2015. The Dutch national shelter umbrella organization

Federatie Opvang will host the event in The Hague, Netherlands. Like its predecessors in Alberta in 2008 and in Washington DC in 2012, the conference aims to strengthen links between shelters at regional and global levels. Shelters will share ideas and plan joint strategies to serve women and prevent gender-based violence.

Learn more at www.worldshelterconference.org.

Objective 2015 – Working towards the Network's sustainability

In the two years since its official creation the Network has successfully begun to fulfill its mandate of being an advocate and a knowledge broker for and with shelters across the country. As we move forward it is important that we focus on our sustainability. As you may know, the organization received no government funding in 2013, its 1st year of existence. In 2014, a two year project of \$200,000 was approved by Status of Women Canada. This project will allow us to further develop our work in the area of knowledge exchange. It does not, however, provide us with the stability we need to work on the transformational change that needs to happen. Also, it does not allow us to carry out the research and outreach on priorities deemed essential by shelters.

In the next three years, we envision a much stronger Network that will provide leadership and work to bring greater recognition to the work of shelters and their expertise. Through the gradual ramping up of activities, the Network will have the capacity to provide platforms for shelter workers to further develop their skills and share and demonstrate to partners and stakeholders their expertise from their unique vantage point. Having a unified voice on VAW allows us to develop strong partnerships.

With the capacity to broker knowledge, we also want to be an important resource for shelters across the country. We plan to organize a national forum in the spring of 2016 in which shelter leaders will share ideas and resources and engage in peer learning and innovation to build their own capacity and to advance the high quality services they deliver.

2015 will be a crucial year in our development. On March 8th, we will launch a clickable map of shelters across the country. To date, we have secured one major funder and we are currently in the process of identifying others. This initiative is integral to the Network's sustainability. Another major element of our sustainability strategy is to have individual shelters become members of the Network. During the coming year, we will be approaching various companies to provide us with gift cards for shelters which would help offset their membership fees to the Network. We have spoken to a sample of shelter Director's and all were enthusiastic about the idea and it's potential. Greater detail to come in our next newsletter. There are clearly many exciting possibilities ahead to respond to the needs and incredible work that shelters are doing every day of the year. We look forward to working together in 2015!



Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses

Réseau canadien des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes

Presentation to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FeWo)

The Network appeared before the FeWo committee on December 4th alongside Ernestine's House (emergency shelter) and Armagh (2nd stage shelter). The committee is currently undertaking a study on the subject of best practices in education programs, social programs and policies in Canada that prevent violence against women. The network's presentation addressed promising practices which deal with the immediacy of the needs of women and their children fleeing violence as well as promising practices that could lead to the long term change required to make a visible difference in the rates of violence against women in Canada.

The following three promising practises from our members were presented: BC Society of Transition Houses' [Reducing Barriers](#) project which deals with improving practices in caring for abused women with substance use and mental health concerns; the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters' work on adapting and implanting a [Danger Assessment](#)

[Tool](#); and the [Circle of Safety and Support](#) project in P.E.I.

The presentation highlighted the fact that a number of promising practises are developed and implemented with project based funding and that although promising, these practises often do not live up to their full potential for lack of funding. The reason for this being that the time period between the beginning and full implementation of a promising practise is generally three years and that project funding is rarely is beyond two years. When one implements a practise which has clear positive outcomes, the next logical step is to scale it up. Unfortunately, funding is even more difficult at this stage as governments often reject these applications on the basis that they are duplications of previous work.

We also stressed the importance of going beyond addressing the symptoms of violence against women and the need to make a concerted effort to bring about systemic change. A promising practice to enable this is to develop and implement

a [National Action Plan on Violence against Women](#).

National Action Plans can provide a framework for strengthening the systems that respond to violence against women. They call for collaboration between all levels of government, civil society, survivors, and first responders. In April 2014, the Network convened a meeting of 26 women who represented various sectors of the violence against women movement in order to begin to develop a blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence against women.

This work is ongoing and we will provide further information on progress in future newsletters. A copy of the presentation is available [on our website](#).

