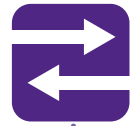


WHAT WOMEN SAID...



missing connections

Women missed out on group programs, face-to-face care, and other opportunities to connect in shelter such as meal-sharing. Women with children, and staff, indicated that this time was really hard for kids, who were not allowed to play together or get hugs and comfort from staff.

"From what I understand, they used to do things in the evenings where the ladies would all get together... it's kind of weird because nobody really talks to you. Everybody just kind of keeps to themselves."



so many rules

Rules within and outside of shelter changed often. Trying to understand and follow all the rules could be frustrating for some women, and some rules didn't take individual needs into account.

"I love this place; if it wasn't for this place I don't know what I would do."

ON

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON violence against women services

"... and it almost feels like bullying at some point... like they're taking the rules more seriously than the community's benefits and the mental side of things."



experiences of safety

Using hotels/motels for extra capacity was not ideal for some women, especially those at high risk of violence. Also, COVID requirements to isolate in rooms could be re-traumatizing to women whose partners control them in this way.



getting support

It was harder for women to get their needs met during the pandemic. Many community services (e.g., housing) shut down, new mandates meant some women were turned away from shelter, and many aspects of shelter life were focused on COVID-19 health and safety.

"I was very isolated in the relationship that I had fled from. So it kind of brought up a lot of reoccurring anxieties, to be secluded and isolated and not be allowed out to go anywhere really."

WHAT WE DID & WHY WE DID IT

In order to understand how the pandemic affected VAW services, we asked over 50 people, including women staying in shelters, shelter staff and manager/directors about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information, visit: <https://gtvincubator.uwo.ca/vawservicespandemic/>

WHAT STAFF SAID...



values & care

COVID-19 guidelines sometimes conflicted with shelter staff values; they felt their “hands were tied” and they could not provide the tailored care for women they normally would.

“[O]ur services are not the same... people should not pass a pandemic [in] a shelter. It’s not the place.”

just keeping up

It was challenging for executive directors and management to keep up with ever-changing COVID-19 guidelines and make decisions on the fly.



“I want to help people and I felt that I was letting a lot of people down...”

ON

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC violence against women services

“Particularly at the beginning, it was changing all the time. So trying to be flexible and taking in new information and that constant change can be challenging.”



missing connections

Staff struggled to connect with women and children due to distancing restrictions. They missed group sessions and providing hands-on support, and generally found their work less enjoyable.



new challenges

Shelter staff took on many new roles (such as cleaning and cooking/meal delivery) and their jobs were made more difficult by service closures in the community (e.g., housing).

I don't like the way the work's changed... I'm a people person, I love talking with the women, I love spending time with the women and children, and that has really diminished.

SO WHAT?

We're using these and related findings to support the sector in developing messages for policy and funding audiences, and the public, to help make sure these services are valued and prepared, going forward.

For more information, visit: <https://gtvincubator.uwo.ca/vawservicespandemic/>