



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Annual Report
2012-2013

**Message
from the
Executive
Director and
the Chair of
the Board**

Greetings

2013 marks 30 years of Avalon Sexual Assault Centre believing the courageous individuals who come forward after experiencing sexualized violence. We have been empowering individuals and communities to mobilize, to take action, to address the systemic issues of sexualized violence since 1983.

The three core programs Avalon offers are community education, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program (SANE) and therapeutic counselling services.

Program Highlights

Individual Counselling and Group Programs

Avalon counselling staff provided a combined total of 1453 sessions, which represents an increase of 100 sessions above last year. We served 274 clients over the 2012/13 program year, a very slight increase of 10 clients above last year. The direct service counselling hours provided by Avalon Centre in this program year totaled 1706.25 hours (an increase from last year's total). These direct service hours include: consultations, safety foundation building sessions, relational healing sessions, and phone support with active clients, collateral contacts involving active clients and advocacy work on behalf of active clients, pre-post group meetings, and group sessions).

Community/Legal Education and Professional Training

Provided a wide range of presentations, workshops and professional training to community based agencies, schools, universities and professional groups and organizations. A total 3,072 participants benefited from these education sessions.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program (SANE)

Direct medical/forensic response was provided to 90 clients. Additionally, immediate assistance was provided by phone to 28 clients and healthcare professionals regarding immediate sexual assault.

A more comprehensive overview of program activities are outlined program reports that follow.

Advocacy Activities

Unwasted Website

The Mental Health, Children Services and the Addictions Branch of the N.S. government developed a site that hosted an "Elly" video depicting a young girl who got "wasted" and suggest that she was sexually assaulted. In Avalon's view the video's message could easily be interpreted as victim blaming. We wrote a letter to the Addictions Branch and expressed our concern about this type of messaging and our concern that it can create barriers to young people seeking help and that it further stigmatize the issue of sexual assault. The video was removed from the site.

Bridget Campaign

The Halifax Harbour Bridge Commission launched a sexist campaign that used sexual innuendo and imagery to suggest that people slow down on the bridge. The campaign used the voice and image of a woman "Bridget", to deliver messages to men about speeding, tailgating and texting while driving.

Avalon issued a Press Release and an open letter to the CEO of the Halifax Harbour Bridges expressing our concerns and asking that the Bridget campaign cease immediately. We also met with the CEO of the Bridge Commission. After great deal of negative media coverage the campaign was eventually removed.



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Year in Review

- City Of Halifax – Initial Response Counsellor/Legal Advocate – Requested: 50,000 Status: Pending Community Awareness – Requested 3,000 Status: Awarded 3,000
- Nova Scotia Government - Initial Response Counsellor/Legal Advocate – Requested: 50,000 Status: Rejected
- Law Foundation of Nova Scotia – Community Legal Education – Request: 50,733, Status: Awarded: 50,733.
- Metro United Way – Promoting Sexual Assault Awareness, Prevention, Empowerment and Community Mobilization – Requested 100,000 –Status: Rejected
- Canadian Women Foundation – Youth Outreach Project - Requested: 28,000 Awarded: 28,000
- Canadian Women's Foundation – Initial Response Counsellor/Legal Advocate Requested: 25,000. Awarded: 25,000
- Status of Women Canada – Violence Against Women and Girls Project– Requested: \$200,000 over 2 years. Status: Approved
- Service Canada - Summer Career Program: Requested \$13,054.00 Awarded: \$5,631.00

A significant event occurred in the spring of this year that resulted in Avalon Centre experiencing an overwhelming increase in demand for services. We required emergency funding. The provincial government provided Avalon Centre with a one-time only emergency funding of 100,000. The Canadian Women's Foundation came to our aid and extended their support. Avalon Centre is very appreciative of the support that we received, not only from these funders, but also from many of our community partners.

In this fiscal year 2012/13, we proudly introduced The Avalon Model: Empowering Individuals and Communities to Respond to Sexualized Violence. This was completed with input from the staff and Board of Avalon Centre, authored by Peggy Mahon. It was distributed to stakeholders in September 2012. This was made possible due to the funding support of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women which recognized and supported the need for a provincial strategy for delivery of sexual assault services in

Nova Scotia and the documentation of the model.

Peggy Mahon led a Board Retreat where we reviewed our progress on the 2010-2012 Board goals and developed a Board of Directors Strategic Framework, 2013-2015. Key Result Areas include: Financial Stability and Sustainability; Strong Governance; Human Resource Strategy; Public Awareness, Recognition and Relationships; Strategic Planning.

A Visioning Workshop was held with Board and staff in April to develop a Strategic Framework. A new Vision Statement, Mission and Guiding Principles are being developed. This updated version will be added to our website soon.

On May 2, 2013, the fourth annual "Light After Dark" event in support of Avalon Sexual Assault Centre was held at the Company House in Halifax. This year's event featured singer-songwriter Heather Green and provided guests a fantastic night of music, entertainment and a Silent Auction. Many thanks to LeeAnne Arsenault, past Board member, for coordinating this event and to Mary Anne Daye and the Company House for providing the amazing venue.

Additional activities included:

- Job Descriptions were revised and finalized for all staff including, the Executive Director.
- Our by-laws were reviewed and amended.
- A Board Orientation Checklist was developed and will be approved this fall.

Throughout the past year the Chair, the Executive Director, and staff attended numerous meetings with government officials at the municipal and provincial levels.

Message from the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board



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**Message
from the
Executive
Director and
the Chair of
the Board**

Challenges

Due to continued high requests for counselling, including a significant increase in women experiencing recent and immediate sexual assaults, our waitlist continues to grow. Currently we have an eight month wait list. The Centre has three full time counsellors and a counsellor in a short term position. We were able to extend this short term until March 2015. This significant extension is only possible because of the one-time only emergency funding that we received in the spring. We need long term core funding to sustain this position on a regular bases. Even with this added position we are still have an eight month waitlist. If we are to address the waitlist we must increase the number of counselling staff at the Centre.

Avalon continues to receive a growing number of requests from communities from across the province seeking our assistance with public awareness and educational programming. These communities want to implement awareness and preven-

tion initiatives. Due to our limited resources, we are not always able to extend the support that is being requested.

Our Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program (SANE) has not received an increase in core funding in eight years. This has prevented us from implementing standards that have been adopted in other jurisdictions. For example many SANE programs in North America provide response beyond 72 hours, in most cases up to a week. Because of lack of funding we are not able to expand our response time beyond three days. As a result we have had to decline several requests for services.

Sexual assault services in Nova Scotia lack adequate resources to respond to the growing demand for basic care such as counselling, awareness/prevention and medical/forensic/support care.

Moving Forward

In the spring of this year a young teen age girl, Rehteah Parsons, took her life after reporting that she had been sexually assaulted and bullied. Her courageous parents publically challenged the nature of support that their daughter received from the justice, health and education systems. In the aftermath of this tragedy the N.S. Provincial Government established an Action Team on Sexual Violence and Bullying. They produced a Progress Report and Transition Plan. This report highlights actions for moving forward, including the need for prevention of sexual violence and bullying and improved response to victims and support for survivors of sexualized violence. They have committed to ensuring that the action outlined in the report will move forward.

Sexual violence is a community problem and collectively we must commit to creating a community solution. We ask that the Government continue to partner with community to as we move forward to implement the action plan outlined their Progress Report and Transition Plan.



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Appreciations

Many thanks to Board members stepping down, Jody Tulk, Suzanne Huett, Jennifer Girard and Darlene Jamieson, for their many contributions. It is with great relief that Darlene has agreed to provide advice to the HR committee as needed – thanks Darlene for that & your many years of invaluable advice to the Board.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all the staff and the team of SANE's at Avalon Centre for their hard work in supporting the mission and vision of the Centre. Your dedication and compassion to this work is highly valued.

Irene Smith
Executive Director

Gaye Wishart
Chair of the Board

Vision Statement

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is a feminist organization working to eliminate sexual assault/abuse and to change the current socio-political culture that fosters sexism, social injustice and other forms of oppression.

Mission Statement

To provide services for those affected by sexual violence, with primary emphasis on support, education, counselling and leadership/advocacy services for women.

Guiding Principles

As advocates, counsellors, educators, health practitioners and activists, we are committed to providing a leadership role in the community by developing our practice around the following guiding principles:

We believe:

- That sexual violence is caused and maintained by social and political imbalances of power. Therefore, we are committed to working with our colleagues, clients and community using a feminist approach to invoke change and healing at both personal and societal levels.
- In using a flexible, client-centred approach that supports the inherent right to self-determination. As such, we support clients by being non-judgmental, providing information about their options and affirming their decisions.
- That healing is a process. Therefore, we offer a variety of program options that reflect different needs and layers of recovery work.

We are committed to:

- A practical approach that promotes victim empowerment and acknowledges that the person who commits the violence is responsible for his behaviour.
- Reducing barriers to accessing Avalon Centre's confidential services within our existing mandate and resources.
- Providing a leadership role in eliminating barriers for access to justice.
- Working with grassroots and women's organizations and other community partners on a local, provincial and national level to improve social policy and promote social action.
- Fostering an environment that supports self-care and provides professional growth and learning opportunities for staff, students and volunteers.
- Being flexible and accountable by developing policies, procedures and programs that are in keeping with our mission statement, principles and resources.
- A women-only staff and Board of Directors.

We acknowledge that sexual violence profoundly affects individuals, families and our community. We ask every member of our community to support us in assisting sexual assault/abuse survivors/victims, their partners and non-offending parents to heal from the effects of sexual violence. We challenge all people to commit to a culture free from sexual violence and abuse.

Vision, Mission And Guiding Principles



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Individual Counselling and Group Program Services

The Counselling Team

The counselling team consists of three full-time positions currently filled by Nancy Gray, Elizabeth Fitzgerald, and Glenda Haydon. Pam Rubin filled a newly created part-time, Initial Response Counsellor contract position from January to June 2012. Due to continued high counselling requests and growing wait lists, this contract position was extended in July 2012 for an additional six months. Allison Desjardins stepped into the position, which gained an additional day per week (4 day work week) to compensate for a temporary reduction in one of the permanent counsellors hours.

Allison's contract was subsequently extended throughout the 2012/13 fiscal year and into the current year within a five day work week. In May of this year, Allison's contract position was further extended to March 31st, 2015, within a 5 day work week. This significant extension was made possible by the emergency funding received by Avalon Centre in the spring of this year. In May we also experienced a significant staffing challenge following one of the permanent counsellors beginning a six month sick leave. In July of this year,

we hired Autumn Chilcote to fulfill a one-year contract, which combines filling in for the six month sick leave, along with an additional six months made possible through the emergency funding in order to help address rising counselling requests following the Rehtaeh Parsons tragedy.

The significant events that occurred within Avalon Centre this spring, along with the specific ramifications to the counselling program are beyond the scope of this annual report, which covers the 2012-2013 fiscal year. A full account of the various ramifications will be included in the 2013-2014 report.

The counselling program would like to acknowledge the ongoing substantial efforts of Irene, our board members and all staff, in addressing ongoing high demand for counselling services, which was further heightened by the additional surge this spring. We recognized that this surge has significantly affected all staff and all programs.

Individual Counselling Services

The current counselling services offered by Avalon Centre include: initial phone counselling requests, initial consultation sessions, short-term safety foundation building sessions and relational healing-focused sessions. New counselling request calls are responded to within a week and we strive to offer an initial consultation session to each new client of the Centre within four weeks. Women who have experienced recent sexual assault (past month) continue to be prioritized for consultations, which are offered within a one week period to the best of our ability.

We continue to provide up to 10 initial, quicker to access "Foundations of Safety" sessions to those who have experienced recent sexual assault. We have broadened our quicker to access Foundations of Safety sessions to include all those who have experienced sexual assault within a one year period. The reality we see is that the immediate safety ramifications following sexual assault generally extend throughout the first year and in many cases even

beyond. These safety related concerns include: addressing high levels of emotional distress and risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation due to the recent trauma; heightened exposure to secondary wounding through disclosures to peers, family members and systems and in particular with the criminal justice system; concerns around further victimization by the perpetrator(s); and safe housing barriers. We are aware of a vital "window period" following more recent sexual assault to work to actively offset, buffer and counteract the internalization of sexual assault related stigma and victim-blaming. We are also aware that a significant number of those who experience recent assault are youth and young women within the 16-25 age range, which represents an age group that are at a higher risk of not following through with counselling when not seen more quickly following the initial call. With the additional counselling hours afforded through the full-time Initial Response Counsellor contract position being extended over this fiscal year, we were able to



ensure that all those who identified experiencing sexual assault within the past year were able to begin Foundations of Safety sessions shortly following their initial consultation. This has met a vital need that would not have been possible without the addition of this position.

We continue to offer up to 20 initial "relational healing" focused sessions for those who have experienced past sexual violations in childhood or adulthood. Our wait list for these sessions held at six months over the majority of the fiscal year due to ongoing high counselling requests for counselling related to childhood sexual abuse and past sexual assault. The wait list peaked to a new level of eight months during the spring surge. As the statistics have shown over the years, a high percentage of women return to Avalon Centre to address further layers often stemming from multiple abuse experiences beginning in childhood, which have caused major ramifications in their lives. Women are able to re-access further counselling sessions following taking a mandatory break. This approach is in keeping with our stepping-stone model, which supports the gradual and safe processing of significant past trauma and losses while increasing women's personal resources and empowerment. The mandatory break serves to help manage our wait lists and works for some women. However, for many of our clients who experience complex trauma effects as a result of significant childhood abuse and neglect, the requirement of mandatory breaks impedes the building of safety, consistency and trust, which are absolutely necessary to create a therapeutic working alliance. Enforcing mandatory breaks in these cases often results in therapeutic ruptures and failures, which contributes further to women's feelings of despair, abandonment and hopelessness. These outcomes also add tremendously to counsellor's experience of vicarious trauma. Therefore, in order to maintain our practice of client centered, ethical therapy and to ensure that we meet the required standard of "do no harm", we assess each woman's needs on an individual case basis to determine the timing of breaks.

We began this year providing the option of occasional "check-in" sessions for women who are on breaks to help offset concerns

regarding significant setbacks occurring when losing the safety net of a trusted counsellor in the midst of their healing process. Many women have made use of these check-in sessions. We also provide occasional "follow-up" sessions for women who have engaged in extensive healing work at Avalon Centre and are no longer requiring more frequent sessions. This allows them to extend and stretch out the container of support provided by Avalon Centre, which women report makes all the difference in their level of security in managing this transition. Women actually report that even knowing they can call in for a follow-up session helps to avoid becoming overwhelmed when triggers arise at times of significant life challenges!

With Allison's contract position hours being extended to full-time over this fiscal year, she has been able to provide some limited check-in sessions to women on our lengthy relational healing wait list who indicate a high level of immediate distress. We are aware that many women who contact us for counselling related to historical sexual abuse often call at a point where life circumstances have set off a flood of flashbacks and memories resurfacing from the past trauma. We know that this flooding experience feels to the person like "the abuse is happening all over again". Thus, we know that there is also an important "window period" for these cases in providing some immediate assistance in grounding and stabilization to help offset a greater crisis developing. While we are able to offer this small "safety net" to a few women, we know that many others on our wait list also need this assistance. We are also aware that women drop off from the wait list as they lose their nerve and motivation to begin specialized sexual abuse/assault counselling after such a long wait.

Individual Counselling and Group Program Services



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Individual Counselling and Group Program Services

Group Program Service

During the 2012/2013 programming year, the counselling team of Avalon Sexual Assault Centre once again offered a reduced group program to focus limited resources towards addressing ongoing high requests from women seeking individual counselling.

We presently offer groups within three broad areas of focus including: "Safety Building Foundational Group Programs", "Relational Healing Focused Group Programs" and "Living Fully in the Present Group Programs". In a general sense, the safety building foundational programs help prepare women for the relational trauma healing focused programs, which in turn help prepare women for late stage, living fully in the present programs. All group programs are co-facilitated by Avalon Centre counselling team staff and supervised graduate students on counselling place-

ments, which ensures a high standard of service. A brief description of each program is included below.

The Group Program Services provided by Avalon Centre this fiscal year consisted of 4 group programs totaling 19 sessions, along with 19 pre-group meetings Avalon Centre provided 259.75 hours of direct client service through our group's sessions. A combined total of 28 women began in these programs, while 27 completed them. (Please note that the sessions offered were reduced for the, "Intentional Aspects of Healing" program due to a small participation level). Overall, we saw a small increase in the number of group sessions offered this year and the number of clients served as compared with the previous fiscal year. Please refer to the attached chart for a statistical summary of our 2011/2012 group program year.

Counselling Program Evaluation Project

In January of 2013, the Counselling Program began working with Elaine Toombs, a graduate student with the Health Promotions Department of Dalhousie University to develop a program evaluation template and to complete an evaluation project. We decided to break the evaluation project into three phases including: an individual counselling program evaluation, a focus group component involving women who have taken part in our group program over the past two and a half years; and a statistical review of current open files to better capture the complexity of our cases in terms of multiple trauma factors.

Over the winter months, we co-developed two individual counselling program evaluation questionnaires following a feminist-based qualitative research model of narrative-based interviewing. The questionnaires reflect the two streams of the counselling program, (Foundations of Safety stream and the Relational Healing stream). We also developed a set of questions for

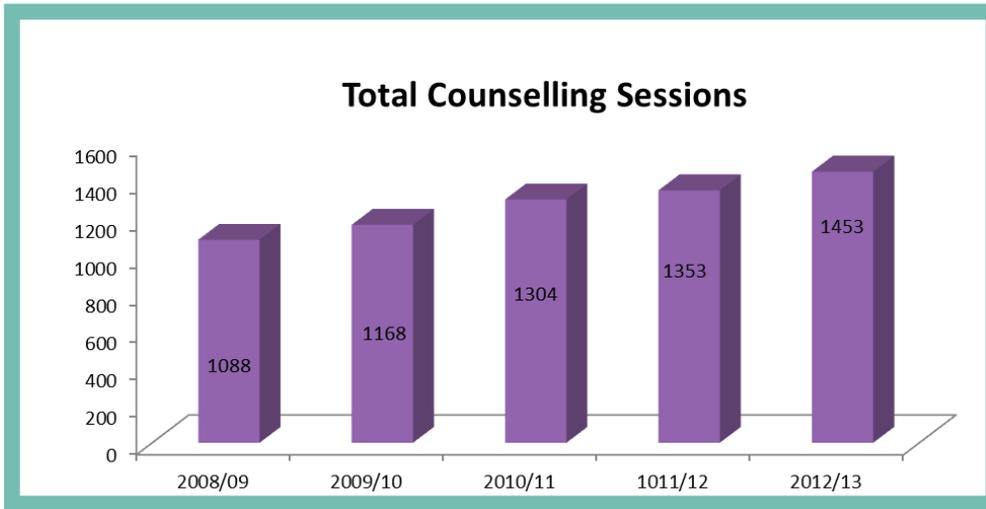
the focus groups to capture how our specialized counselling program model differs in comparison to other sources of counselling and psychotherapy offered in our community.

In the spring of this year, we developed information and consent forms for the individual counselling program evaluation interviews and for the focus groups. Women were contacted and invited to participate in two focus groups, which were held during the month of June this year. I will report on these focus groups in next year's 2013-14 annual report. We had to postpone beginning the other two phases of the evaluation project this spring due to the unexpected leave of one of the counselling staff. Our hope is that Elaine can begin carrying out the individual interviews with 40 women this fall, which will take some time to complete as she is doing all this work on a voluntary basis. We are very fortunate to have Elaine's involvement in this program evaluation.



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SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Statistical Breakdown of Counselling Program

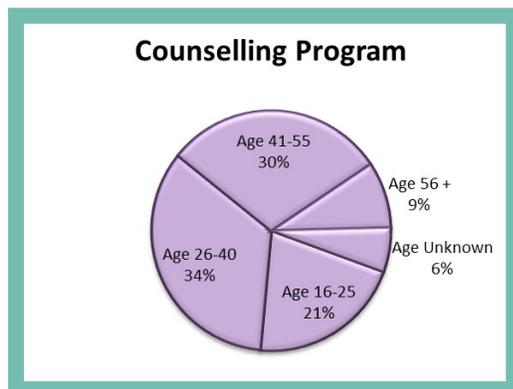


**Individual
Counselling
and Group
Program
Services**

- We see a gradual increase in total counselling sessions over the past five years. This has been facilitated by an expansion in counselling hours due an increase in Nancy’s position hours from part-time to full-time beginning in Sept. 2010, followed by the addition of a part-time, (3 days a week) Initial Response Counsellor contract position starting in January 2012, which was extended to full-time (4 days a week) starting in July 2012 through to the end of the fiscal year.
- The increased counselling sessions total in 2012-13 contrasted with a small decrease (8.9%) in counselling request calls, indicates that a greater number of individuals who called in followed through with participating in counselling sessions as compared with the previous fiscal year.
- The number of foundation of safety sessions showed a significant increase

this year while the relational healing sessions showed a modest decrease. We saw a small increase in consultation sessions above last year’s totals.

- The increase in foundations of safety sessions can be attributed largely to the Initial Response Counselling contract position hours being increased from part to full-time at the outset of the 2012-13 fiscal year.
- Childhood sexual abuse cases increased this past fiscal year, while adult sexual assault cases remained on par with the previous fiscal year. This resulted in a 16.5% disparity. Combined C.S.A. and A.S. A. cases rose 5.5% this last fiscal year.
- Please note that numbers add up greater than total requests as many clients present in more than one category.



Community/ Legal Education and Professional Training

About the Program

The Community/Legal Education and Professional Training Program includes four types of educational services: Public Awareness and Public Education, Community and School Based Education, Legal Education, and Professional Training. This program also encompasses professional consultation, legal education and training, public/professional information sessions, participation in public awareness events, public speaking, resource displays, as well as resource development/distribution.

The main objectives of this program are: To increase understanding of root causes and effects of sexualized violence. To change societal, professional, and systemic perceptions of and responses to victims/survivors of sexualized violence.

The primary goals of public awareness and public education are to prevent sexualized violence from occurring, to increase support for people who have been sexually victimized, to address sexual violence as a systemic societal issue and to engage/mobilize people and communities to take action on sexualized violence.

During 2012/13 the main focus of professional training/consultation was to build individual, organizational, and community capacity to respond to/support people dealing with issues pertaining to sexualized violence and to address sexualized violence issues proactively to prevent fur-

ther and to minimize existing harm. There continued to be a need to specifically build service providers' and educators' capacity to work with youth primarily in the areas of first response/support and awareness/prevention education. The majority of the community/school/legal based education programming focused on educating youth and youth service providers on violence in relationships, sexual assault definitions and laws, consent/age of consent, hyper sexualization, and cyber violence. This year we were fortunate to receive funding for a second year from the Canadian Women's Foundation for the Youth Outreach Education Project. This funding supports the arts based sexual assault awareness, prevention, empowerment, and engagement work we do with girls/young women in partnership with the YWCA - Halifax (Girl Space), Lea Place in Sheet Harbour, and through youth programming supported by the Youth Health Centres in local high schools.

The Community/Legal Education and Training program is coordinated by Jackie Stevens. The Youth Outreach Educator responsible for coordinating youth sexual assault awareness, prevention, empowerment and engagement is Jane Gavin-Hebert. Thanks to other Avalon staff members and student placements who have assisted with resource displays/public events and resource development/distribution this year.

Public Sexual Assault Awareness/Prevention/Mobilization

Avalon Centre's public awareness campaigns are intended to increase public awareness about sexualized violence as a systemic societal issue and to improve knowledge about Avalon Centre's programs and services. This was achieved in the following ways:

- Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2012 (May)
- Don't Be That Guy poster campaign (in partnership with HRP and other community partners)
- International Day of the Girl (10/11/12) – Girls Run the World video <https://vimeo.com/54543765>, Youth Art Showcase.
- CONSENTfest 2012 (December) – Avalon participated in two panels, facilitated a consent workshop and distributed resources.
- ASK for sexual consent campaign (ongoing)
- Amanda Todd memorial vigil (in partnership with Alice Housing and THANS)



Community/Legal Education and Training

There were 206 inquiries/requests for community/legal education and training. We were able to participate in 155 educational/training related activities. There was an increase in requests from schools specifically for curriculum based education sessions for grades 7-9 in the topic areas of violence in relationships, sexual assault/harassment, cyber violence, and youth empowerment/engagement. We also facilitated school based workshops in response to issues being addressed by the school or in support of school prevention/awareness activities. Some of our community education endeavors enabled us to reach audiences that we don't usually have access to, i.e. Avalon was invited to speak during the Outgrow Patriarchy – an event part of the Occupy Movement; We participated in resource displays and/or talk back sessions after the presentation of the play "Of This World" (a play about youth dating sexual assault) and the Ghosts of Violence Ballet.

We continue to provide first responder training and volunteer training for Help Line, the Saint Mary's University Women's Centre and Dalhousie South House (formally Dalhousie Women's Centre), and Ravensburg College Policing Services cadets. In keeping with our commitment to building the capacity of service providers, organizations, institutions, and communi-

ties to respond to sexual assault we embarked on a professional training initiative with Dalhousie University. As a result we participated in their orientation training and resource fair for resident staff, are on their sexual assault/harassment working committee, and facilitated a two professional training workshop that included participants from security, student services, housing, and other departments. Avalon was a member of an interagency planning committee for a two day Domestic Homicide Symposium and Sexual Assault Training Workshop. We also provided training for Residence Dons at Kings College, assisted with the training of new Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, and presented to the LPN class at the Nova Scotia Community College (Waterfront Campus).

All education and training sessions have a legal education component as we provide information about sexual assault laws, consent/age of consent, mandatory reporting, etc. We also get asked to assist with/participate in legal endeavors because of our specialized knowledge of sexual assault law. i.e. guest lecture for SMU criminology and Dalhousie Law School classes, consult on Pro bono Students Canada/Dalhousie Women's Centre's sexual assault research projects and resource development, etc.

Community/ Legal Education and Professional Training

Community Liaison/Professional Consultation/Administrative Duties

The Community/Legal Education and Training program plays an integral role in Avalon's community liaison/collaboration and providing professional consultation and information sessions for services providers, students, community partners, and key stakeholders. The aim of this work is committed to improve collaborative approaches to addressing sexualized violence and responding to victims/survivors. This year there many youth service providers were consulting with us around how to talk with youth about issues such as hypersexualization, cyber violence, and empowerment. There is also a move towards programs to engage males in sexual assault awareness. As more and more organizations and communities move toward coordinated sexual assault initiatives and youth engagement activities, they look to Avalon for consultation, support, resources, and as a model of practice.

HRP Police Victim Services, Avalon Centre, Bryony House, Alice Housing, The YWCA Halifax and other community/women's organizations are partnering on The Clothesline Project. This violence against women awareness initiative is in the planning stage but will be launching public displays in 2013/14. Avalon Centre provided consultation to Dalhousie Security regarding language and messaging when issuing public statements regarding sexual assaults on campus in order to minimize victim blaming and secondary wounding. HRP has also asked us to consult on their media messaging.



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

**Community/
Legal
Education
and
Professional
Training**

Youth Outreach Education Project

The **Youth Outreach Education Project** ran from November 2011-December 2012. We also received funding for this project from January-December 2013. While the first part of the 2011/12 project was addressed in last year's annual report, this report will also touch on highlights of that project. The project is coordinated by Jane Gavin-Hebert. Some of the youth programs listed here are not all specifically part of the Youth Outreach Education Project but may have resulted from the project's activities and may involve project participants and staff. The Avalon Sexual Assault Youth Education Project is committed to supporting youth empowerment and resilience. This project is a partnership with the YWCA Girls' Space, Lea Place Women's Centre in Sheet Harbour and Youth Health Centres in HRM high schools. During the project Jane facilitated engagement/mobilization arts-based workshops for youth (predominantly girls) ages 12-19 on issues relating to sexualized violence as well as supported sexual assault projects initiated by youth and girls groups. During the project Jane developed and facilitated 32 workshops in 14 schools across HRM, participated in/facilitated 5 training sessions, and attended 8 community events for 521 workshop/training participants. She distributed approximately 600 Avalon resources through the project. 462 participants engaged in art-based programming

such as block printing posters, silk screening T shirts, letterpress baking, radical graphic design, digital audio recording, resistance collage, political mobiles, and making empowerment kites.

Girls Run The World: Independent contractor Nicole Landry received funding from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women to create a video to commemorate International Day of the Girl. Avalon Centre partnered with Nicole to host Girls Run the World. This was a day long Girls Empowerment event that was attended by 59 girls ages 10-17 and included 12 adult mentors/facilitators and two youth peer mentors. The day included interactive art based activities such as dance, hoola hooping, spoken word, collaging, and kite making to discuss issues such as self-esteem, bullying, body image, sexualized violence, and female empowerment. The Girls Run The World video was filmed throughout the day.

Hands on Empowerment: Last year's report highlighted the Hands on Empowerment Sculpture that was created by a group of young women during a project partnership with AGNS. In May Avalon Centre hosted an Art Opening at AGNS. The sculpture was on display at AGNS from May-October 2012 and now hangs in Avalon Centre's group room.

Legal Support/Advocacy

As a result of a decrease in funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia (due to the drop in interest rates), Avalon was unable to sustain the Legal Support Advocate. This service was terminated in June 2012. Between April-June the Legal Support Advocate, Theresa Emberly, provided legal information, support, advocacy, court preparation and accompaniment, and liaised with law enforcement/legal professionals on behalf of 16 women (13 existing and 3 new clients). The service was formally provided from November 2007 to June 2012. In that time we worked with 197 people. 104 of these women and non

-offending parents received assistance throughout the duration of the service. It is important to note that the first woman Theresa provided support to in 2008 was also her last client in 2012. Between June 2012 and March 2013 Avalon Centre received over 50 requests for legal support and advocacy. While we addressed this to the best of our ability, the fact that we were assisting many of the same clients over four years attests to the lengthiness of the legal process and the need for a dedicated service to address the myriad of need.

Resource Development/Distribution

Avalon Centre distributed 4,882 resources in 2012/13. This included providing youth focused resources to the Tri County Women's Centre for inclusion in their sexual assault tool kits that were created as part of their sexual assault youth peer educa-

tion project. Posters, sexual assault zines, and ASK materials were provided to the Student Union of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, SMUWC, Dalhousie, and Kings College for distribution during Frosh Week. Resources were provided during all



education and training workshops, information sessions, and resource displays. The template for the ASK card was provided to several groups and organizations to be printed and distributed as part of their consent campaigns.

This year the Avalon website was revised and we created two new floor display banners to aid in promotion during public events. We continue to update existing educational materials and create new ones.

Moving Forward

There is an identified need for sustainable funding and increased staff resources to support the Community/Legal Education and Training Program. The increase in requests resulting from our work with youth and youth service providers and the continued need for first responder training has demonstrated that awareness and prevention education, youth engagement/mobilization, professional/legal training and program/resource development can no longer be done as part of one year projects by one full time and one part time contract staff person. In order to sustain our current standard of service and to continue to grow and build an innovative education program we must secure increased, sustainable funding. This is especially crucial given the demand in Nova Scotia now for sexual assault prevention and the increase in requests we have received for education and training as result of sexual assault and suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons

and the NS Government’s Action Plan on Sexual Assault and their Provincial Sexual Assault Framework.

In 2013/14 Avalon has funding from CWF to continue the Sexual Assault Youth Outreach Education Project and continued funding from the NSLF towards legal education and training. We have also secured funding from Status of Women Canada for the Dartmouth North Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls project. We also have collaborations planned with Nova Scotia Barristers’ Society, Canadian Mental Health NS, Legal Information Society, the YWCA Halifax, and HRP for training, research, program/resource development, prevention, and youth engagement activities. We are aware that there is potential for other initiatives as the new fiscal year unfolds. It looks like a busy year full of challenges and potential.

Community/ Legal Education and Professional Training

Statistical Overview

Note: Part way through the year I revised my statistical recording process. Due to this, I am unable to provide a consistent break down over the year by specific categories. For the purpose of this report I am using the following headings: *Request/Contact*, **Education/Training** (includes: community/school presentations, professional/volunteer training, resource displays, public events, conferences, key notes, guest lectures, legal education/training endeavors, etc.); **Administrative/Community Liaison/Consultation** (includes: staff/student orientation and supervision, professional consultation, information sessions, meetings, Avalon professional development); **Inquiries Only** (contacts that did not result in any

action to date); **Unable to Attend** (activities we were not able to participate in due to prior commitments, limited resources, did not fit within our mandate, etc.); **Resources Distributed** (includes resources provided during all education and training sessions, resource packages distributed to schools, Youth Health Centres, requested by other service providers for distribution through their activities/programming, resources provided during displays, public events, conferences etc. This does not include the resources distributed through the counselling and SANE programs) and **Number of Participants** (estimate of people who were provided education services).

Request/Contact	Total: 660
Education/Training	155
Admin/Community Liaison/ Consultation	344
Inquiries Only	36
Unable To Attend	15

Total Number of Participants	Approx. 3, 072
Total Number of Resources Distributed	Approx. 4, 882



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SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Youth Outreach Education Project

**Community/
Legal
Education
and
Professional
Training**



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About the SANE Program

The Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program provides immediate response to sexual assault victims/survivors requiring medical/forensic/supportive care. Now in its 13th year, the program provides SANE response to 4 health centres within Halifax Regional Municipality: the QEII Health Sciences Centre, Dartmouth General Hospital, the Cobequid Community Health Centre, and the IWK Health Centre for Women, Children, and Families. The SANE Program is funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness.

A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) is a registered nurse with advanced training and education in sexual assault examination and treatment, including medical and forensic examination of sexual assault victims. There are currently 14 on-call nurses. The SANE Program provides emergency response to all genders and ages within 72 hours of a sexual assault.

Response is provided by 2 on-call SANEs 24 hours/day. Immediate care, emotional support, and medical/forensic examinations are provided to victims of sexual assault with their consent. This may include physical assessment for injuries, treatment, support, and information/

referral to available resources. A forensic examination may also be completed, which may include evidence collection, careful written and photo documentation, and evaluation of injuries. The SANEs also provide fact and expert testimony if the case proceeds to a court of law.

The SANE Program is committed to community involvement and provides education sessions, principally medically focused, about the SANE Program, sexual assault response and examination, drug facilitated sexual assault and sexual assault trauma to specialized groups and learners. Education sessions/lectures were provided to medical residents and students (IWK Child Protection Team, Dalhousie Emergency Medicine and Family Medicine, and Medical Students), Dalhousie nursing students, Emergency Nursing and Paramedicine students, local emergency department staff, and others.

A six day orientation was delivered by the Coordinator to 7 new Avalon SANEs. Three SANEs from the Antigonish Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Services also attended this curriculum delivery.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Community Involvement

The SANE Coordinator is involved in a number of community committees and chairs the Halifax Sexual Assault Response Team (HSART). This committee includes members from the Avalon Centre, Halifax Regional Police, RCMP, NS Public Prosecution Service, NS Department of Justice Victims Services, CDHA emergency department and Provincial Sex Offender Treatment Program. The committee has established a formal protocol for sexual assault response, and works to address the issue of sexual assault through a shared goal of raising awareness and improving our response to persons who have been sexually assaulted.

Other involvement includes: IWK Multidisciplinary Child Protection Rounds Committee, Child and Youth Advocacy Centre Steering Committee, Atlantic Partners in Sexual Assault Response (Co-chair), and the Forensic Nurses Society of Canada (Board Secretary).

Professional Development

The SANEs are committed to ongoing professional development and attend education sessions regularly. Some have also been able to attend the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) Conference. This is our international professional body of forensic nurse professionals and provides an opportunity for the SANE's to share important knowledge and practice related to sexual assault and forensic nursing and incorporate evidence-based strategies into our nursing practice, ensuring a high standard of care is maintained. We currently have 3 SANE's who hold a SANE-A (Adult/Adolescent) Certification. The SANE Coordinator also holds a SANE-P (Pediatric) Certification. Certification as a SANE-A and/or SANE-P signifies that a sexual assault nurse examiner has demonstrated the highest standards of forensic nursing practice.



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Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Service Delivery and Trends

Direct medical/forensic response was provided to 90 clients this year. Additionally, immediate assistance was provided by phone to 28 clients and healthcare professionals regarding immediate sexual assault. Although not possible to fully account for a decrease in numbers reporting this year, we do know that there have been several cases this year not referred by hospital staff or police, which would anecdotally explain a significant decrease. This, combined with a known turnover in staff within those departments, lends to a need for further education. A change in data collection methods regarding information calls would reflect a variation in this number. We also received several consults to respond within a week of the assault, although beyond our 72 hour mandate, which raises the issue of extending our response time. In these cases, SANE was unable to respond to meet the client's needs, resulting in ER staff providing this care. Expanded response beyond the traditional 72 hours has become a standard model across North America, however we are currently not adequately resourced to meet this gold standard of care.

Typically, reports are significantly higher May to November; however, the numbers did not appreciably increase over these months as they have in previous years. There is no correlation between the type of assault reported and the month, i.e., these numbers are not associated with university students, attending bars, campus sexual assaults, or specific holidays, but are a combination of scenarios, age groups, and dynamics throughout the year.

Our program continues to receive many calls with requests for information and assistance from outside the HRM area regarding immediate care of sexual assault victims and assistance with completion of sexual assault evidence kits, as well as guidance for implementation of SANE Programs in other areas within the province and outside the province. We continue to advocate for expansion of sexual assault services across the province. In the fall of 2012, the government announced a Sexual Assault Framework Committee to look at the issue of sexualized violence in our province. A report is expected in the fall of 2013.



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During a response, the SANEs offers choices to victims following an immediate sexual assault: medical examination, medical and forensic examination with evidence collection for immediate police involvement, as well as medical and forensic examination with evidence collection for storage (evidence frozen for 6 months) and possible police involvement at a later date. The breakdown for these choices is as follows:

- Sexual Assault Evidence Kits (SAEK) completed and for immediate police transfer – 30 cases (33%)
- SAEK's frozen for storage - 28 cases (31%)
- Sexual assault medical exam only (no evidence collection) – 32 cases (36%)
- Five (14%) cases involving stored evidence were later released to police.

Slightly more clients chose not to complete a forensic exam or pursue police involvement this year, although not a significant change from last year.

The majority of assaults reported occurred in the HRM. We continue to have a number of victims reporting who were assaulted in other areas of the province and reporting to the SANE program in Halifax as they were unable to have the medical/forensic exam completed in their community within a reasonable time period. Nine clients seen (10%) were assaulted outside HRM. There are only 2 SANE Programs in Nova Scotia: Halifax and Antigonish, which serves the Guysborough/Antigonish/Straight/Richmond/New Glasgow area.

One of the most significant risk factors for sexual assault is the use of alcohol by the victim or the offender. Alcohol is the number 1 drug used in drug facilitated sexual assault, not the reputed drugs such as GHB and rohypnol.

During this fiscal year, 48% of clients seen and a large number of offenders had consumed alcohol. This is a decrease from previous years, with 60% of cases

involving alcohol last year. In 42% of all cases, drugging was suspected, consistent with numbers seen in previous years. In many cases of drugging, alcohol is also involved, although it is important to note that there has been little or no alcohol use in many of these cases. Overall, in most of these cases, alcohol/drugs were believed to have played a key role in the assault, supporting alcohol and drug use as major risk factors for sexual assault. This is in keeping with offenders assaulting those in vulnerable conditions, whether due to voluntary alcohol and/or drug consumption or by deliberate drugging or purchasing drinks to facilitate a more vulnerable state.

To add to the complexity of drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault, many of the victims have partial or complete memory loss about the assault, leading to an even greater reduction in reporting rates, both for medical care and to police. Many victims disclose that they are reluctant to report because they were not able to recall the details of the assault. Additionally, those who consume alcohol under legal drinking age or consume illegal drugs are less likely to report due to fear of legal implications.

Ongoing trends we have seen this year are a high number of clients with mental health concerns (20%), repeat victimization (18%), and multiple risk factors (24%). Although it is known that perpetra-

tors will target those in vulnerable situations, these numbers remain consistently high and pose a great concern, as these clients are at increased risk for multiple health sequelae and more difficult recovery.

Increasing levels of violence, including assaults with weapons (4%), threats of death/further harm (9%) strangulation (11%) and multiple offenders (15%) continue to be a considerable concern. Nearly 10% of cases seen involved 3 or more perpetrators, which increases risk of more serious injury, disease, and difficult recovery.

The advancement in technology continues to play a role in sexual assault, with reports of clients who have been sexually assaulted following a meeting with someone met via the internet (online dating, social networking sites), as well as many concerning reports about pictures and videos of the assault being taken with cell phones and distributed. Resulting cyberbullying is a concerning issue, particularly with youth.

We continue to work with our community partners to address these concerns and seek possible solutions.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Court Appearances and Outcomes

Over the last fiscal year 26 subpoenas were received by SANEs to attend court involving 8 Nova Scotia Provincial Court trials and 1 Supreme Court trial. Three of these cases were adjourned and the nurses reissued subpoenas. Four nurses testified in 4 different trials. All SANEs testified as fact witnesses in these trials. There was no call to qualify as expert witnesses in these cases.

In total, 15 known cases remain before the courts for this fiscal year, including trial continuance or sentencing from last fiscal year. Disposition of these cases are as follows:

- 3 cases adjourned
- 1 case where charges were withdrawn
- 1 case dismissed
- 3 trials with acquittals
- 2 trials with convictions
- 5 pled guilty/plea bargains reached
- 3 cases remain before the courts

The total number of cases where SANEs were not involved such as those involving guilty pleas or where SANEs were not called to testify is unknown.



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Court Appearances and Outcomes Continued

Although considerable reports from community partners to support a significant contribution to the legal outcomes of these cases, it has been difficult to establish the actual significance of the SANEs involvement in legal outcomes. A disposition project involving all SANE cases with police involvement has been initiated and discussions about further research in this area to

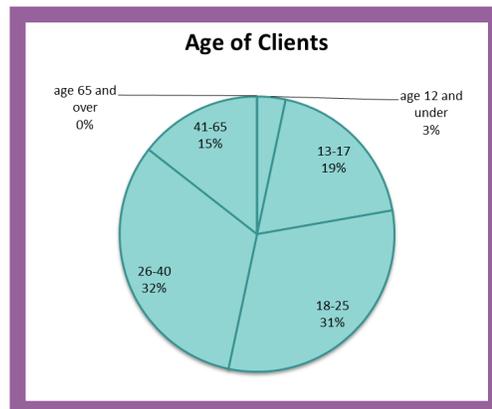
determine outcomes and impact are ongoing.

Some more conclusive outcomes are testimonials from clients regarding the immense positive impact SANEs have had in their short and long term recovery. Additionally, there have been significant legal outcomes where SANEs have played an important role in the conviction.

By the Numbers: SANE Program

The vast majority of offenders continue to be known to the victim, in particular casual acquaintances, friends, colleagues, or brief encounters (known < 24 hours)

- 7% domestic violence/intimate partner sexual assaults, involving partners/ex partners
- 3% of reports involved offenders met online
- 12% of reports involved stranger assaults
- 71% of reports involved a single offender
- 9% involved 3 or more offenders
- 95% clients seen were female
- There were no female offenders identified.
- The majority of assaults occurred in the victim's or offenders home
Assaults in more public places such as in hotels, bars, vehicles, student residences and outdoors are largely associated with unknown offenders or those known < 24 hours
- 53% of clients seen were under the age of 26



Moving Forward

Ongoing education with SANE partners needs to continue, with emphasis on the ER and police in light of a turnover in staff, to gain a better understanding of the SANE role. In consultation with community partners and government organizations, the SANE Program will continue to be focused on a plan for SANE standards and expansion

of sexual assault services including advocating for implementation of new SANE Programs throughout the province. Sexual violence is a community problem in need of a community solution and we need to work together to address prevention, treatment, best practice, and optimal long term outcomes across the province.

# of SANE's subpoenaed	# of SANE's testified	Charges	Court	Disposition
2	1	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Supreme	Acquitted
2 (1 twice)	0 (called off)	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Provincial	Adjourned, then dismissed
2 (twice)	1	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Provincial Court trial	Adjourned, then acquitted (2 accused – same for both)
2	pending	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Supreme Court trial	Adjourned to Jan 2014
2	1	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A) Assault causing bodily harm s.267(b) Unlawful possession of a knife for a purpose dangerous to the public peace s.88(1) Assault by threatening to use or using a knife s.267 (a); Uttering a threat s.264.1 (1)(a)	Provincial Court trial	Sentenced to 12 months, DNA order 9 months, concurrent 2 months, concurrent Acquitted Acquitted "Judge's insightful analysis of the evidence shows the close attention which she paid to details, and so the importance of evidentiary detail in this type of case."
2	0 (called off)	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Provincial Court trial	Adjourned to Feb 2014
2	1	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Provincial Court trial	Acquitted
4	0 (called off)	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A) x 2	Pled guilty	Sentenced to 32 months, DNA order on both counts.
2	0 (called off)	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A) Anal intercourse s.159	Provincial	Adjourned then withdrawn
2	1 (qualified as expert witness)	Forcible confinement S.279(2) Sexual assault with threats to cause bodily harm s.272(2)(B) Failure to comply with probation order s.733.1(1)(A) Breach of recognizance s.811 Anal intercourse s.159 Robbery s.344(B)	Supreme	Found guilty of 272(2)(B), 279(2), 733(1)(A), 811. Charges withdrawn on 159, 344 (B). Sentencing pending dangerous offender application.
2	pending	Sexual interference s.151 x2 Invitation to sexual touching s.152 Sexual assault s.271(1)(A) x2	Supreme Court trial – judge and jury	Adjourned to Nov 2013
2	0 (called off)	Administering noxious substance s.245(A) Criminal harassment s.264.1(1)(A) Assault with a weapon s.267(A) Aggravated assault s.268 (1) Material benefit s.279(2) Possession of a weapon for dangerous purpose s.88(1) Aggravated sexual assault s.273(1) Theft over \$5000 s.334(A)	Pled guilty	Pled guilty to 334(a), 273(1), 264(2)(b). Sentenced to 7 years, DNA order, SOIRA Order for 273(1). Sentenced to 2 years for 334(a). Concurrent sentencing. Charges 268(1), 267(a), 279(a), 88 (1), 245(a), withdrawn at sentencing.
0	0	Failure to comply with conditions of undertaking s.145(5.1) Sexual assault s.271(1)(A) Fabricating evidence s.137 x 2	Pled guilty	Sentenced to 9 months probation (YCJA) Acquitted Sentenced to 9 months probation on each count
0	0	Sexual assault s.271(1)(A)	Pled guilty	Sentenced to 2 years, 7months, 16 days, DNA order, SOIRA order.
0	0	Assault with a weapon s.267.1(1)(A) Aggravated assault s.268 (1) Kidnapping s.279(1.1)(B) Forcible confinement s.279(2) Attempt to commit murder s.239(1)	Pled guilty	Sentenced to 2 years for 267.1(1)(A), 9 years, for 268(1), 4 years for 279(1.1)(B), 2 years for 279(2) concurrent sentencing Charge dismissed for 239(1)

**Sexual
Assault
Nurse
Examiner
Program**



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Treasurer's Report

During the past 2012-2013 fiscal year, the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre continued to focus its financial resources on trying to maintain services while facing challenges in obtaining the funding required to do so. Revenues fell by \$89,000 (16%) primarily due to a decrease of \$44,000 in funding from the Law Foundation. Our core source of funding, the Department of Community Services, provided \$341,800, the same as prior year. We held our fourth annual Light After Dark fund raising event and were able to increase total revenues for the year from donations and fundraising activities.

Our operating expenses declined in the year by \$87,000 as we reduced expenses where we could while trying to maintain services in order to match the decline in revenues. We did not renew our legal support position as a result of the cut in funding from the Law Foundation. Our spending on special projects declined as some projects were completed.

At the end of the fiscal year we had a net deficiency of \$26,600 which has been cov-

ered by existing reserves. As the demand for our services increases and our resources are limited we have been relying on our unrestricted reserves, which were \$51,488 at the end of the March 2013. The reserves will only support another year or two of deficits before other sources of funding must be found if we are to continue to offer our current level of services.

This year the Centre managed several projects and programs including the SANE program which continued to be supported by the Department of Health through the IWK Children and Women's program for \$292,000. Several other projects were managed during the year including funding from the Status of Women Canada to support a multi-year project on preventing and reducing violence against women in high risk neighbourhoods.

Thank you to the Executive Director and staff of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre for their commitment to the Centre and its mission.

Laurie MacKeigan, CA

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Summary Statement of Revenue and Expenses Year ended March 31, 2013

	2013		2012	
Revenue				
Department of Community Services	\$	341,800	\$	341,800
Law Foundation		50,733		94,311
Donations, Fundraising		31,339		21,681
Project Funding		48,089		103,213
	\$	471,961	\$	561,005
Expenses				
Salaries and benefits	\$	379,798	\$	401,067
Special projects		46,228		92,355
Rent		50,912		49,238
Communications		29,373		19,504
Office and administration		38,174		69,663
Administrative Allocation		(45,928)		(47,128)
	\$	498,557	\$	584,699
Deficiency of Revenue Over Expenses	\$	(26,596)	\$	(23,694)



Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee would like to present the following nominees as members of the Board of Directors for Avalon Sexual Assault Centre for the 2013-14 term:

Iana Luther
Emma Halpern
Kerry Copeland

Returning Members:

Gaye Wishart - Chair
Angela Jeffrey
Sylvia Parris
Debbie Campbell - Secretary
Tess Laidlaw
Ann McCabe
Laurie MacKeigan

The following members are not reoffering:

Darlene Jamieson
Jody Tulk
Jennifer Girard
Elizabeth McCarville
Suzanne Huett

Respectfully submitted by Kerry Copeland

Avalon Staff

Autumn Chilcote, *Counsellor (term staff)*

Allison Desjardins, *Counsellor (term staff)*

Gwyneth Dunsford, *Communications Officer (term staff)*

Elizabeth Fitzgerald, *Counsellor*

Jane Gavin-Hebert, *Project Staff—Youth Education Outreach (contract staff)*

Nancy Gray, *Counsellor*

Glenda Haydon, *Coordinator, Individual Counselling and Group Program Services*

Kaley Kennedy, *Communications Officer (term staff)*

Ann Lawton, *Administrative Assistant, SANE Program*

Cindy Preeper, *Office Manager*

Pam Rubin, *Counsellor (term staff)*

Irene Smith, *Executive Director*

Jackie Stevens, *Coordinator, Community/Legal Education and Professional Training*

Susan Wilson, *Coordinator, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program*



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