

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Annual Report

2011-2012

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.

Message from the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board

Greetings,

The past year has been a busy and exciting year for the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and it is our pleasure to report on the highlights of both our accomplishment and our challenges.

Avalon Centre has collaborated with the Halifax Regional Police-RCMP Integrated Major Crimes Sexual Assault Unit, Forensic Sexual Behaviour Program of N.S. (FSBP), Halifax Regional Crown Attorney's Office, the Department of Justice, Victim Services, and the Capital District Health Authority for several years with a goal to establish a Halifax Sexual Assault Response Team (HSART). The HSART Protocol document has been signed by the agency representatives and we now have an official HSART. This group has come together in a shared goal of improving our response to persons who have been sexually assaulted within the Halifax Regional Municipality.

With funding from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, we were able to document the Avalon Model of Care, a model that has evolved over our 29 year lifespan. We hope that our model, with its focus on "empowering individuals and communities to respond to sexualized violence," will be used as a template that will assist the provincial government and communities in Nova Scotia to develop a strategy for comprehensive sexual assault services.

This year Avalon continued to partner with other agencies on a number of youth sexual assault awareness and prevention initiatives. These initiatives focused on a range of art

activities and peer engagement and mobilization efforts. One art piece that was created is currently on display at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Our Youth Outreach Educator also facilitated a number of educational workshops on issues related to sexualized violence with youth ages 12-19.

In an effort to respond to a six month waitlist we increased the part-time counsellor position to full-time. We also hired a part-time counsellor in a term position. Our team of counsellors served 264 women with 1353 counselling sessions for a total 1623 counselling hours.

Our team of on call SANE's provided 24/7 care to a total of 119 individuals who experienced an immediate sexual assault (within 72 hours).

Other noteworthy highlights include:

- Hosting a half-day symposium entitled, "Community Response to Sexualized Violence," for community members and stakeholders in March 2012. It was highly successful with a capacity crowd which highlights the need for ongoing education and development in this area.
- The third annual "Light After Dark" event was held during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. It was a very successful event and we would like express our sincere thanks to former board member Lee Anne Arsenault for coordinating this event, the Company House for hosting us again this year and to

the many contributors to our silent auction.

- Kaley Kennedy was hired as the Communications Officer on a one year term, effective January 25, 2012. Unfortunately she will not be able to fulfill the term; she added great value to the organization while she was here and we wish her well in her new position.
- The Board approved a significant expenditure to upgrade Avalon Centre's computer equipment and server. We would like to thank the firm of Merrick Jamieson Sterns Washington & Mahody Barristers for the generous loan of their IT support person during this project.
- We received a \$70,000 increase in core funding from Department of Community Services in response to our request for an additional \$200,000 to increase direct services and address wage parity.
- The Law Foundation cut our funding by \$43,500 for 2012. This was devastating news and resulted in the elimination of the Legal Advocacy Support Worker position at the end of May 2012. Avalon has lost \$62,300 from this funding source in the last two years. We cannot sustain any further cuts from the Foundation as our proactive education outreach work is funded from this source and this work is integral to our mission.

Challenges

Due to yet another year of increased requests for counselling, including a significant increase in women experiencing recent and immediate sexual assaults, our waitlist is ever-growing. While we are pleased that women are coming forward seeking support, we struggle with the dilemma of supporting new requests for counselling while continuing to counsel women who are in the midst of their healing process.

Avalon Centre continues to be a leader in public awareness and educational programming. A growing number of communities and organizations are implementing or want to implement awareness and prevention initiatives. Due to our limited resources, however, we are not always able to accommodate their requests for assistance.

As the only full time sexual assault centre that offers specialized sexual assault services in Nova Scotia, we experience many challenges in our efforts to respond to the increased demands for services. We are also noticing an increase in the level of violence and the complexity of sexual assaults/abuse reported at the Centre. Our organization lacks the financial and human resources to respond to these demands from clients, service providers, and the general public in the province.

The underlying problem is that Nova Scotia does not have a planned strategy to address sexual assault; the province lacks nearly all of the components that typically comprise a comprehensive response in other jurisdictions. This has resulted in communities struggling in isolation to address the issue and an ad hoc patchwork of attempts to meet needs without adequate resources.

This year, we welcomed Jennifer Girard to the Board and we wish to thank Melanie Petrunia for all her work as she leaves the Board. Barbra Mealiea is stepping down as Treasurer and we would like to express our sincere thanks for her expert advice and stewardship for our scarce resources over these many years.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank all the staff and the team of SANEs at Avalon Centre for their hard work in supporting the mission and vision of the Centre. Your expertise and dedication are highly valued and much appreciated.

Irene Smith
Executive Director

Gaye Wishart
Chair of the Board

Nominating Committee Report

I have the pleasure of presenting the following nominees to the Board of Directors of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre for the term 2012/2013:

Gaye Wishart
Darlene Jamieson
Jody Tulk
Sylvia Paris
Debbie Campbell

Kerry Copeland
Angela Jeffery
Elizabeth McCarville
Jennifer Girard

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry Copeland

Treasurer's Report

As we continue with our long term strategy, Avalon Centre focused in 2011-12 on developing new partnerships, building on our communication and marketing to increase awareness of our work, and on developing grant proposals to new funding sources. We held our third annual Light After Dark fund raising event that we hope will continue to grow as a constant source of revenue. Work in the previous year to build a stronger relationship with our funders resulted in an increase of \$70,000 in core funding received in the 2011-12 fiscal year from the Department of Community Services. As a result, we have added a communications position and increased our counseling FTE.

During fiscal year 2011-12, we received a total of \$341,800 of our core operating support from the Dept. of Community Services, representing 61 per cent of our funding. Fortunately, our support from the Law Foundation remained steady in this fiscal year at \$94,311. There continues to be uncertainty around this funding which currently represents 16 per cent of our budget. Due to the economic situation, the Law

Foundation has informed us that our funding for 2012-13 will be decreased by approx. \$43,000. This represents a decrease of over 57 per cent in 4 years. As a result, we have not been able to renew our Legal Support position for next year.

The Board continues to draw on contingency funds to meet our budget as the demand for our services outweighs our resources. We realize that this is only a short term solution.

Again this year, the Centre successfully managed several projects as well as partnering with other agencies on projects. The SANE program continues to be supported (\$292,000) by the Department of Health through the IWK Children and Women's program. This program budget is well managed by the SANE program staff to ensure that the program continues to offer the highest level of service possible for our clients. Other special projects were funded through the Departments of Justice and Health, the Province of Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

Thank you to the Executive Director and staff of the Avalon Centre for their continuing commitment to the goals of the Centre and their stewardship of the Centre's funds.

**Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Mealiea, CGA**

Audited Financial Statements

AVALON SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE
Statement of Revenue and Expenses
Year Ended March 31, 2012

	2012	%	2011	%
REVENUE				
Department of Community Services	\$ 341,800	60.93	\$ 271,800	61.62
Law Foundation - Core funding	94,311	16.81	94,311	21.38
Voluntary Sector Professional Capacity Trust (Note 3)	40,046	7.14	-	-
Canadian Women's Foundation (Note 3)	24,292	4.33	6,040	1.37
Donations, fundraising and other	21,681	3.86	24,043	5.45
Department of Justice (Note 3)	12,411	2.21	22,500	5.10
Status of Women (Note 3)	10,000	1.78	-	-
Province of Nova Scotia (Note 3)	8,466	1.51	5,511	1.25
Summer student funding	7,081	1.26	7,874	1.79
SANE-Provincial Model for Nova Scotia (Note 3)	917	0.16	-	-
Department of Justice - Special projects (Note 3)	-	-	2,500	0.57
WJI Project (Note 3)	-	-	6,500	1.47
	561,005	99.99	441,079	100.00
EXPENSES				
Salaries and benefits	389,899	69.50	350,647	79.50
Special projects	92,355	16.46	27,810	6.30
Rent	49,238	8.78	47,629	10.80
Capital equipment	27,745	4.95	-	-
Communications	16,961	3.02	-	-
Office supplies	8,062	1.44	8,355	1.89
Board and staff development	9,615	1.71	1,524	0.35
Summer student	8,143	1.45	14,621	3.31
Insurance	7,104	1.27	7,046	1.60
Telephone	4,531	0.81	4,471	1.01
Professional fees	3,291	0.59	2,909	0.66
Miscellaneous	3,288	0.59	6,431	1.46
Grant writer	3,025	0.54	-	-
Equipment rental and repairs	2,893	0.52	8,124	1.84
Advertising and website	2,543	0.45	2,397	0.54
Computer training	1,000	0.18	-	-
Fundraising	750	0.13	-	-
Meetings	723	0.13	762	0.17
Travel	661	0.12	975	0.22
Education	-	-	2,532	0.57
	631,827	112.64	486,233	110.22
	(70,822)	(12.65)	(45,154)	(10.22)
ADMINISTRATIVE ALLOCATION	47,128	8.40	43,432	9.85
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ (23,694)	(4.25)	\$ (1,722)	(0.37)

See notes to financial statements
AC Hunter Telier Belgrave Adamson
Chartered Accountants

Communications Report

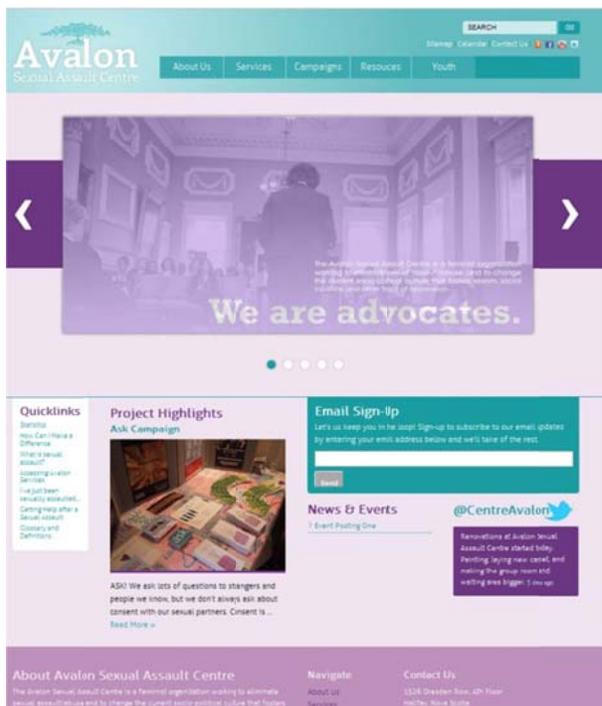
In January, Avalon Centre hired a Communications Officer to assist in improving communications and media relations at the Centre. Unfortunately, Kaley Kennedy, who was hired for the position, will not be able to complete her term and hiring will need to be undertaken in 2012-13 for her replacement.

Website Redesign

Content

Since January, Avalon Centre has been working on a website redesign. The focus has been on making the content more user-friendly by making it shorter, more accessible, and easier to scan and navigate.

This process is almost complete, with all content and design being complete.



Design

The new website includes:

- Integration with our Twitter account, and easy access to Avalon's Facebook page;
- Easy ability for users to share content via email and social media;
- Event calendar and news feed; and
- Easy to use content management system so website updates and additions can be done in-house.

Media Report

Since January, the Centre has been trying to focus Avalon's message on the need for a provincial strategy to address sexualized violence. Below is a list of media reports that mention Avalon between January and March:

- Behind the Curtain
Dalhousie Gazette
- Will bars up their security training?
Dalhousie Gazette
- Letter to the Editor from Avalon
Dalhousie Gazette
- Responding to Sexualized Violence
Global TV

Social Media

- 72 more followers on Twitter (increase from 29 followers to 101)
- 50 new "likes" on Facebook
- Created Flickr and YouTube accounts in order to increase social media presence with photos and videos where possible

Community/Legal Education & Professional Training

About the Program

The Community/Legal Education and Professional Training Program includes four types of education programs: Public Awareness and Public Education, Community and School Based Education, Legal Education, Professional Training.

The main objectives of this program are:

- To increase understanding of root causes and effects of sexual violence.
- To change societal, professional, and systemic perceptions of and responses to victims/survivors of sexual violence.
- The primary goals of public awareness and public education are to address sexual violence as a systemic societal issue and to mobilize people and communities to take action on sexual violence.

Community Education

Professional Consultation/Training:

Avalon Centre Sexual Assault Awareness, Response, and Support training workshops, staff orientation, and information sessions for community partners such as Help Line, Public Health/Youth Health Centres, Dalhousie Women's Centre, Saint Mary's Women's Centre, etc.

There was an increase in professional consultations with youth service providers this year stemming from the Youth Feasibility Study,

Stop It ASAP, and Youth Outreach Education Project.

We provided consultation, support, and information sessions for a wide range of service providers and students seeking to increase their understanding of sexualized violence and improve their response to victims/survivors.

Type of Request	Total: 615
Community Presentation	12
School Presentation	43
Information Display	40
Workshop/Conference	10
Volunteer Training	9
Professional Training, Consultation, information sessions	50
Avalon Professional Development	16
Avalon Staff/Student Orientation & Supervision	50
Meetings/Community Liaison/Contacts	344
Unable to Attend	20
Inquiry Only	21
Total Number of Participants	Approx 1,411
Total Number of Resources Distributed	Approx 5,000

Public sexual assault awareness and mobilization

Avalon Centre participated in a number of initiatives this year such as Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2011, ConsentFEST, and

International Women's Week. We also attended various public events to promote Avalon Centre's programs and services.

Resource Distribution

Resources are distributed at resource displays during public events, during education and training sessions, and to clients and visitors of Avalon Centre. Resources packages are provided to many of our community partners as well as available electronically.

The ASK cards, sexual assault zines, and Avalon posters continue to be in large demand. During SAAM 2011 we distributed teal ribbon lapel pins and teal "End Sexual Violence" bracelets. These items were well received. Pins, bracelets, a series of 3 posters, bags and zines are included in the Stop It ASAP tool kit. Response to these items have also been favourable. The zine and posters are written in both French and English.

Youth Programming

Building on the results of the Youth Sexual Assault Services Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study, as well as ongoing educational endeavors, Avalon Centre continued to partner with other agencies to focus on youth sexual assault awareness and prevention this year. Some examples include:

- participating in the Girl Conference hosted by Mount St. Vincent's University;
- consulting with the Department of Health and Wellness in their research regarding youth hyper-sexualization, sexualized violence, and alcohol use; and
- providing consultation, support, resources and presentations for various community and school based youth programs.

Stop It ASAP (Awareness of Sexual Assault Project), Nov. 2010 - Dec. 2011

- a partnership between Avalon Centre, YWCA-Halifax Youth Programs, and Citadel High School Youth Health Centre's Girls

Action Group, funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation

- Between April and December the project was focused on supporting participants in their art activities and peer engagement and mobilization efforts.
- A tool kit was developed for youth and service providers to use to educate and engage youth in sexual assault awareness and prevention.
- Avalon Centre was invited to model Stop It ASAP at a skills building institute hosted by The Canadian Women's Foundation for the groups they fund who provide youth violence prevention education.

Hands on Empowerment (Sexual Assault Youth Awareness and Empowerment Art Project), Nov. 2011-Mar. 2012



- a partnership between Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, funded by the N.S. Department of Community Services, Child and Youth Strategy Youth Engagement Grant.
- Ten young women met over 7 sessions with Artist Miro Davis and Youth Outreach Educator Jane Gavin-Hebert. They explored issues pertaining to sexualized violence, sexuality, sexualization, consent, and empowerment through art and discussion.

Sexual Assault Youth Outreach Education Project		
Trainings/Workshops	Community Education Events	Cultural Production Mediums
5 Trainings - 61 participants 26 workshops - 328 participants 13 schools within the HRM	4 Conferences 3 Theatre Productions	Blockprinting Posters Silkscreening T-Shirts Letterpress Baking Radical Graphic Design Digital Audio Recording Resistance Collage Political Mobiles
389 Total Participants	153 Total Contacts	358 Total Art Makers

Sexual Assault Youth Outreach Education Project

November 2011-December 2012.

- This is a partnership between Avalon Centre, YWCA – Halifax, Youth Health Centres, and Lea Place, funded by The Canadian Women’s Foundation
- With the support of the Canadian Women’s Foundation Violence Prevention Grant in 2011, Avalon hired a Youth Outreach Educator to facilitate arts-based popular education workshops on issues relating to sexualized violence with youth ages 12-19 in the HRM.

Avalon’s youth programming increased from 7 schools in the 2010-2011 school year to 13 schools in 2011-2012. Our current indicators reveal there is an increased demand for youth programming and education on issues related to sexual violence. There is a lack of support for survivors of sexual violence who are under 16 years old

The Avalon Sexual Assault Youth Education Project was successful in bridging some of those gaps by providing direct programming to 389 youth workshop participants.

Legal Support and Advocacy

- Total Clients: 75 (27 new, 48 repeat)
- 163 client contacts, 77 direct service hours
- 68 per cent from HRM; 32 per cent outside HRM
- Types of contact: Advocacy/support (28 per cent), Reporting to police/legal info (15 per cent), Resources/Research (15 per cent), Court Prep/Accompaniment (13 per cent), Referral (6 per cent), Police accompaniment (5 per cent)

This is the fourth year Avalon Centre has offered Legal Support and Advocacy through core funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia. Along with providing information, support, and advocacy pertaining to navigating the legal and court systems, Avalon has also participated in various public legal education conferences and events as presenters or participants. We have also provided information sessions and consultation to service providers to enhance their understanding of sexual assault and the law and to promote our legal support/advocacy services.

The Legal Support Advocate acted as a consultant for Dalhousie Law School Pro Bono



Students who were creating a Sexual Assault Legal Information Booklet for the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society (NSBS). The Legal Support and Advocacy Program was also featured in an article in the NSBS newsletter. In March, we were informed by the Law Foundation that we would be receiving a decrease in funding for 2012-13. This resulted in the termination of Legal Support and Advocacy. We wish to thank Theresa Emberly for her efforts to develop and implement this program and for her dedication to the women, non-offending parents, and service providers she assisted.

Due to lack of financial resources and staff as well as the ongoing educational/training needs of these agencies, Avalon Centre is not always able to accommodate these requests. While we have been successful in obtaining one year grants to improve our response to the ever increasing demands, our current funding cannot sustain or grow the Community/Legal Education and Training Program to enable Avalon Centre to address the ongoing, current, and ever changing sexual assault educational and training needs of Nova Scotians. During the fiscal year of 2012/13, we will be exploring sustainable options for the future.

Successes and Challenges:

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre continues to be seen as leaders in sexual assault awareness and prevention and as a model for public awareness and educational programming. Many more government, institution-based, and community organizations in Nova Scotia are implementing sexual assault initiatives, programs, or services, and embracing the social analysis or public health approach to awareness and prevention that includes engaging bystanders. They continue to look to Avalon Centre to provide a leadership role.

Individual Counselling and Group Program Services

About the Counselling Program

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 immediate sexual assault continue to be prioritized.

The counselling program experienced another busy year with our highest ever number recorded of counselling requests since the professional counselling program began in 1996. The counselling program would like to acknowledge the support of the entire Centre, which backs us up so well and makes it possible for us to respond to the vital needs of so many in the community who have been affected by sexualized forms of violence.

Counselling Staff

The counselling team consists of three full-time positions currently filled by Nancy Gray, Elizabeth Fitzgerald, and Glenda Haydon. The Centre approved to permanently increase our former part-time counselling position, which had totaled 3.5 days per week, into a full-time position on a permanent basis. This addition of resources into Avalon Centre's Counselling Program was in response to ongoing record high counselling requests over the past few years. Even with this vital increase of staffing hours, the program continued to face significant

challenges in responding to the high level of service request. This resulted in a part-time, term position being created over the winter months to focus on responding to women requiring more immediate response due to experiencing a recent sexual assault or presenting in a higher level of crisis. We are pleased that Pam Rubin, who has had a long professional association with Avalon Centre, stepped into this temporary position.

Individual Counselling Services:

With a further increase in the number of women seeking our counselling services who have experienced a recent (within the past month) sexual assault, it became important to restructure our short-term "foundation of safety sessions" to increase the number of sessions available for each woman to access to address and mitigate immediate impacts. Women are now able to partake in up to 10 consecutive sessions, which are available on a priority basis. This provides the time necessary to support women through the vital initial stages following a sexual assault. While most women's immediate needs are met within the 1-10 session time frame, a small number of women who experience more extensive safety and crisis concerns require additional sessions, which we assess on an individual case basis.

We continue to offer up to 20 consecutive "relational healing" 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 the increase in counselling requests.

By the Numbers: Counselling Program

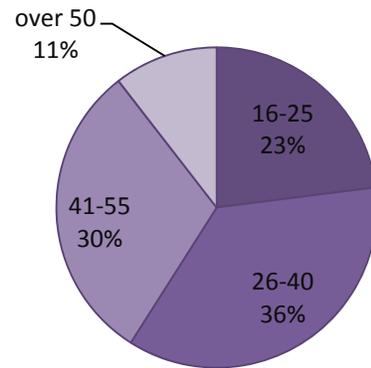
This year, the counselling program served 264 clients and provided a total of 1353 sessions, totalling 1623 service hours.

- 54.5 per cent of clients were new clients and 45.5 per cent were returning clients
- 93 per cent of clients come from within the Halifax Regional Municipality; 7 per cent from outside the HRM

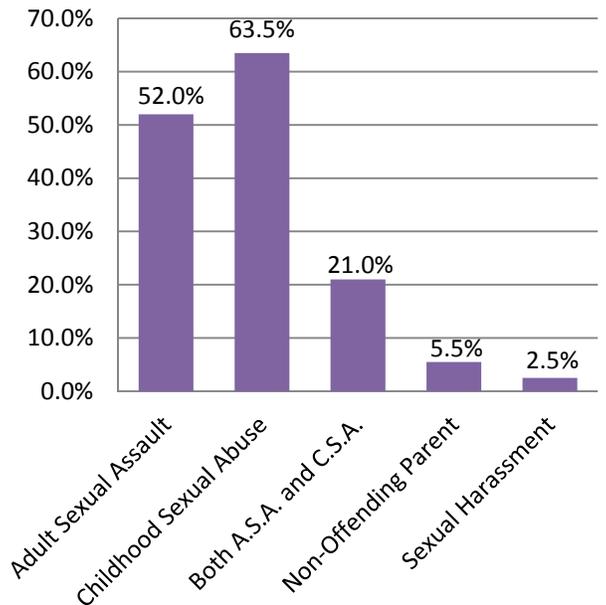
There were 270 new requests for counselling, a 14.5 per cent increase from last year. This was the highest number of requests since the program was started in 1996. These intakes took 56.5 direct service hours.

- 54 per cent of intakes were related to adult sexual assault
- 51 per cent were related to childhood sexual abuse
- 18.5 per cent of calls involved a sexual assault within one month
- 6 per cent of calls were referrals through the SANE program
- 91.5 per cent of calls were from the HRM

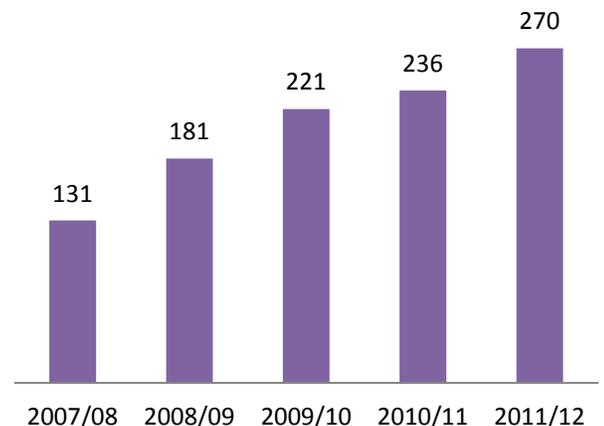
Age of Counselling Clients



Types of Requests



Number of Counselling Requests



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 counsellors' experiences of vicarious trauma. In order to maintain our practice of client centred, 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.

Group Program Services

During the 2011-2012 programming year, the counselling team of Avalon Sexual Assault Centre offered a reduced group program to focus limited resources towards addressing record high requests from women seeking individual counselling, including those identifying recent sexual assault.

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 placements, which ensures a high standard of service.

The Group Program Services provided by Avalon Centre this fiscal year consisted of 2 group programs totaling 15 sessions, along with pre-group meetings offered in preparation for a Spring 2012 program. Overall, Avalon Centre provided 282.0 hours of direct client service through our group's sessions, a small increase from last year. A combined total of 14 women participated in the two group programs.

Community Education

Elizabeth Fitzgerald and Glenda Haydon were invited to New Brunswick by the province's newly formed Sexual Assault Response Team in conjunction with the Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre to present a counselling skills focused two-day workshop. The workshop addressed "Specialized Sexual Assault Counselling and Vicarious Trauma." We received very positive feedback from the sixteen counsellors in attendance and furthered our connection with communities in New Brunswick.

Internal Supervision and Case Consultation

The Coordinator of Individual Counselling and Group Program Services, Glenda Haydon, is responsible for providing case consultation to the other counselling staff. All of our counselling staff are exceptional sexual assault/abuse counsellors and together function as a very strong team. Glenda Haydon also provided supervision to Pam Rubin, while she was completing her part-time, term counselling position over the winter months. In addition, Glenda is also contracted to provide monthly case consultation to Catherine Chambers who is a counsellor on staff with the P.E.I. Sexual Assault Centre. Catherine is also a great

pleasure to work with and both of our Centres benefit from this link.

Professional Development Training and Consultations

Over the course of the year, all three counsellors participated in professional development work on a variety of topics.

During this fiscal year, Glenda Haydon also received continued support to maintain outside telephone supervision with Dr. Janina Fischer to advise us on the handling of our most complex, high risk cases. This supervision continues to prove invaluable in addressing ongoing crisis patterns and therapeutic impasses with women who are highly dissociative due to early and extensive childhood abuse and neglect. This specialized supervision helps the counsellors be more effective in these extreme cases and more protected from building experiences of vicarious trauma.

The counselling staff would like to recognize the support of the Centre, which made it possible for us to participate in very rich, rejuvenating and inspiring professional development and supervisory opportunities over the year. These learning experiences well backed up our challenging, day to day work.

Counselling Program Issues

The challenge faced by the counselling program to manage our limited resources was further heightened this fiscal year. This was due to yet another year of rising counselling requests, including a significant increase in those seeking out quicker to access sessions following a recent sexual assault. The added demand for service placed the counsellors in an ethical dilemma regarding how to meet the needs of new women (and in particular those identifying experiencing a more recent sexual assault), while continuing to support those women who were in the midst of their healing processes. By the fall of the

fiscal year, our “relational healing” wait list once again reached a 6 month wait as a result of these challenges.

We experienced some easing of pressure with our part-time counselling position continuing to receive an increase to maintain full-time hours throughout the spring of this fiscal year until a decision was made by the Centre to permanently restructure the position to full-time hours. The increase to three full-time counselling positions was a significant positive development for the counselling program, which had been attempting to stretch in meeting growing counselling requests over the past three years.

As requests from new and returning clients continued to hold at record high levels, the demand exceeded our ability to respond even with this resource increase. In the fall of 2011, this resulted in the overbooking of counselling sessions with women calling in a high level of distress due to more recent sexual assault or overwhelming flashbacks of past assault/ abuse.

The Centre responded to this high service demand by creating a temporary part-time counselling position to assist with more immediate response. Pam Rubin filled this temporary position over the winter ending out this fiscal year. Pam’s assistance has provided great relief allowing the counselling program to function at a more manageable level. The counselling staff would like to acknowledge the critical support and responsiveness we have received over the past year by our organization. Our health and sustainability has been protected and extended as a result.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program

About the SANE Program

The Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program provides immediate response to sexual assault victims/survivors requiring medical/forensic care. Now in its 12th 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 with the victim's consent, which may include evidence collection, careful written and photo documentation, and evaluation of injuries. The SANEs also provide factual 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 were provided to medical residents and students (IWK Child Protection Team, Dalhousie Emergency Medicine and Family Medicine), nursing students, local emergency department staff, and others.

A six day orientation was delivered by the Coordinator to 6 new Avalon SANEs. Five SANEs from the Antigonish Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Services also attended this curriculum delivery.

Community Involvement

The SANE Coordinator is involved in a number of community committees and chairs the Halifax Sexual Assault Response Team (HSART) committee. 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.

Professional Development

By the Numbers: SANE Programs

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

- 11 per cent were domestic violence sexual assaults, involving partners or ex partners
- 4 per cent of cases involved offenders met online.
- there were 7 reports of stranger assaults this year.
- 87 per cent of cases involved a single offender
- 5 cases involved 3 offender; 2 cases involved 4 offenders; 2 cases involved 5 or more offenders

Cases involving multiple offenders are often more violent assaults, often resulting in more physical injury.

Males comprised the overwhelming majority of documented offenders.

- There were only 4 female offenders identified. All female offenders involved perpetration with a male or multiple male accomplices and all victims in these cases were female.

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.

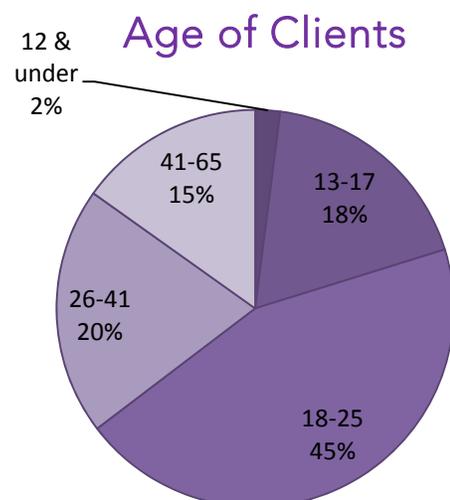
development and attend regular local education sessions as well as larger conferences. Many were able to attend the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) Conference, which was held in Montreal this year. This is our international professional body of forensic nurse professionals and provides an opportunity for the SANE's to share important knowledge and experiences related sexual assault and forensic nursing and incorporate evidence-based strategies into our nursing practice. Several SANEs also attended a Pediatric Sexual Abuse conference in New Brunswick.

Service Delivery and Trends

In addition to the 119 medical/forensic exams completed by the SANE's this year, immediate assistance was provided by phone to 43 victims and healthcare professionals regarding immediate sexual assault.

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.

The SANE Program has seen an increase in the



number of clients this fiscal year, the 2nd highest reported year. The summer months saw more clients and the winter months fewer as 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.

During a response, the SANE 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 – 49 cases (41 per cent);
- SAEK's frozen for storage - 37 cases (31 per cent);
- Sexual assault medical exam only (no evidence collection) – 36 cases (30 per cent); and
- Five (14 per cent) cases involving stored evidence were later released to police.

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. There are only 2 SANE Programs in Nova Scotia: Halifax and Antigonish (serving the Straight/Guysborough/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, 60 per cent (71) of clients seen and a large number of offenders had consumed alcohol. In 44 per cent (25) of all cases, drugging was suspected. 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 victims with mental health concerns, repeat victimization, multiple perpetrators, and drug/alcohol facilitated sexual assault. We have also seen a large number of adults reporting sexual assault, often with alcohol use. Although it is known that perpetrators will target those in vulnerable situations, these numbers are increasing and pose a great concern for us. These victims are also at increased risk for multiple health sequelae and more difficult recovery.

The advancement in technology continues to play a role on sexual assault, with several 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.

Increasing levels of violence, including assaults with weapons, strangulations and multiple offenders continue to be a considerable concern.

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

Court Appearances and Outcomes

Over the last fiscal year 16 subpoenas were received by nurses to attend court involving 9 trials and 1 Preliminary Inquiry in Provincial and Supreme Courts in Nova Scotia. 6 nurses testified in 5 different trials, All SANEs were qualified as expert witnesses.

Disposition of the cases before the courts is as follows:

- 3 cases adjourned
- 3 case where charges were withdrawn or the case dismissed
- 2 acquittals
- 3 convictions
- 1 offender pled guilty
- 1 remains before the courts

There were at least 2 trials where SANE's were not subpoenaed/called to testify. Both cases resulted in acquittals. 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.

Charges included sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, attempted murder, assault, forcible confinement, and uttering threats. 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 is

ongoing with police to determine outcomes and impact.

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 a significant role in the conviction. In a recent case, DNA was successfully obtained from a swab from an area visualized by the SANEs with the alternate light source after the victim had showered. This, in addition to the SANEs compelling testimony about the nature and significance of the injuries, and enriched by the wealth of knowledge and expertise of the SANE, had a significant contribution to the conviction. Without the specialization of SANEs, including the use of specialized tools such as the alternate light source, DNA would not have been obtained in this case and may not have resulted in this aggravated sexual assault conviction. This was not the offender's first offense. SANEs were also involved in the case involving his previous assaults, resulting in a conviction. They will be seeking dangerous offender status on this offender. This case clearly illustrates the importance and impact of SANEs involvement in legal outcomes.

Moving Forward

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.

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