



Paradigm Shifting: Lessons from the Edge of Transformation

September 9, 2008

Presented by: Kate Wiggins
Executive Director Women's
Community House, London Ontario



Objectives

- Introduce our communities and shelters
- Identify our strategic directions
- Present some of our successful collaborations
- Identify challenges
- Questions to consider

Women's Community House (WCH)



- A multi-service agency serving abused women and their children in London, Ontario
- London is a mid sized urban centre which is the 10th largest city in Canada and has a population of 353,395
- Large agency:
 - 2008-09 budget \$4,000,000
 - 2007-08 revenue \$4,024,075; expenses \$4,019,827
 - 31 full-time and 12 part-time staff, 30 relief, and 5 contract
 - Maximum board of 12
 - Four committees of the board – fund development, nominating, social marketing, advocacy and lobbying





Women's Community House offers four main services:

- A 24-hour Helpline
- High security, emergency, short-term shelters for abused women and their children (2 shelters - 67 beds)
- A 25 unit rent geared to income apartment building (Second Stage) where abused women and children can stay for up to one year.
- Transitional support services for women



Service Statistics 2007-08

- 4240 crisis calls
- Provided emergency shelter to 649 residents - 348 women - 301 children. Average length of stay remained relatively stable at 28 days. Our occupancy rate was 85.4%. We directed 753 women and children to other services.
- Provided housing for 110 tenants at Second Stage.
- Provided counselling and advocacy to 1,204 women through our transitional support services.



Women's Community House

Strategic directions 2006-2009

Our Vision....Ending woman abuse and its impact on families and communities.

Our Mission....Providing safe places and services for abused women and their children.

Our Values...leadership, women's equality, choice, service excellence that is women-centered, innovation, collaboration.



WCH Strategic Directions

Address service gaps

Enhance strategic partnerships

Diversify revenue

Develop and Implement a social marketing plan

Engage in Advocacy

Our transformation is about shifting the focus of the board to our vision while staff remain focused on our mission

Women's Community House Model of Care (MOC)



Feminism

- Women-centered counselling
- Strength based
- Recognizes oppression
- Meets woman where she is at
- Brief session short term work
- Based on woman's choices
- Feminist language
- Level and ownership of power
- Advocacy
- Support and empowerment

Intersectionality

- Women's own unique lived reality
- Times of less or more confidence
- Diversity
- Intersecting multiple factors affecting women
- Feeling <or> grounded in differing surroundings

Hope

- Ending woman abuse
- Violence free lives
- Healthy relationships for child witnesses
- Women's equality

Safety

- Physical*
- Emotional
- Residents/tenants
- Self and others
- Harm reduction
- Communal living
- Vicarious trauma
- Confidentiality
- Safety planning
- Safety of information

* (from abuser; in our buildings & systems)



Women's Rural Resource Centre Strathroy & Area (WRRC)

- A multi-service agency serving abused women and their children throughout Middlesex County
- Headquartered in the rural community of Strathroy Ontario with outreach sites in Mount Brydges, Lucan, Parkhill, Glencoe and Newbury
- Medium-sized agency:
 - 2008-09 budget \$950,000
 - 2007-08 revenue \$1,000,000; expenses \$953,000
 - 15 full-time and 12 part-time staff
 - Maximum board of 9
 - Two committees of the board – fundraising and board development



WOMEN'S RURAL RESOURCE CENTRE

STRATHROY & AREA





WRRC offers six main services

- 24 hour helpline
- Secure, emergency shelter for women and their children (12 funded beds)
- Second stage housing (two units...so far!)
- One-to-one supportive counselling
- Transitional support services for women exiting shelter and for women living in the community
- Children's counselling and parenting support for families residing in shelter and for children and mom's in the community

WRRC

Service Statistics 2007-08

- 632 helpline calls
- 88 women and 51 children stayed in shelter; average length of stay increased to 36 days from 18 days in 2006-07; had a 90% occupancy rate
- 5 families lived in SSH
- Supported 100 women through one-to-one counselling
- Supported 122 women with transitional services
- Counselling 111 children and supported 69 moms in children's programme
- Saw a 30% increase last year in number of clients served living in community (did not reside in shelter)



Women's Rural Resource Centre Strategic Plan 2007-2010

Our Vision... To end abuse of women and children.

Our Mission... We are a community resource in education, prevention and support services for women and children impacted by abuse.

Our Values... Collaboration, Leadership, Equality, Accountability, Respect.



WRRC Strategic Directions

Diversify revenue

Engage in advocacy

Enhance strategic partnerships

Address service gaps

Our transformation is about shifting from a crisis intervention model to a sustainable, integrated community support service model.



Why Is Transformation Necessary?

- According to Brian Vallee, nothing much has changed except there are more shelters, fewer men are being murdered by their intimate partners... but women are still being murdered, women are still poor, oppression still flourishes and gender equality is still a distant reality.



How Does Transformation Occur?

- Transformation occurs at 3 locations:
 - Community: partnerships, collaborations
 - Governance: board focus on vision
 - Operational: policy/practice



What Does Transformation Look Like?

- Communities that work collaboratively toward hope and change, rather than in pathological isolation.
- Strategic planning that focuses on vision rather than mission.
- Policies and practices that centralizes women's experience rather than shelter scarcity.

What Does Transformation Mean?



- Who determines a woman's housing status?
- What "proof" of abuse is acceptable? Is her word enough?
- What conversations and actions should board members be engaged in to achieve the vision?
- Whose in charge of the diapers?
- Who owns the Plan of Action?
- Who decides who stays and who goes?



Transformation is...

- Moving from a crisis oriented service to an integrated community based service focused on prevention, community awareness and education.
- “Centralizing” a woman in the process and working with her where she is at.
- Helping her to sustain herself safely - where she chooses to be.



Transformational Shifts

- Scarcity
- Silos
- Isolation
- Social Control
- Crisis
- Response
- Victimism
- Women/Men
- Abundance
- Collaboration
- Relationship
- Social Change
- Transformation
- Prevention
- Systemism
- Humanity



Successful Collaborations

- West Region Project – transformed how separate Ontario Ministries with vested interests worked in collaboration on VAW issues
 - Neighbours, Friends and Families
 - Support for Coordinating Committees
 - And... how local communities work collaboratively on a regional basis to be more effective.



Challenges to Transformation

- Board engagement in the vision of transforming the world
 - Need to be ambassadors of SOCIAL CHANGE
- Transformation of system silos has to occur from the community up
- Service provision has to be driven by the women that we serve



Questions to Consider.

- How many of your organization's strategic directions are related to vision and how much money is designated to achieving the vision?
- How much time and energy is spent on fundraising for immediate needs?
- Have women's experiences changed and have we shifted enough to still be relevant?