

Danger Assessment Utilization in Alberta Shelters: A Preliminary Report

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*Danger Assessment Utilization
in Alberta's Shelters*
is a project of the:



Funded by:
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Project Background

Please note: we are at the halfway point in this research. The final report will be available in Summer 2009.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 3)



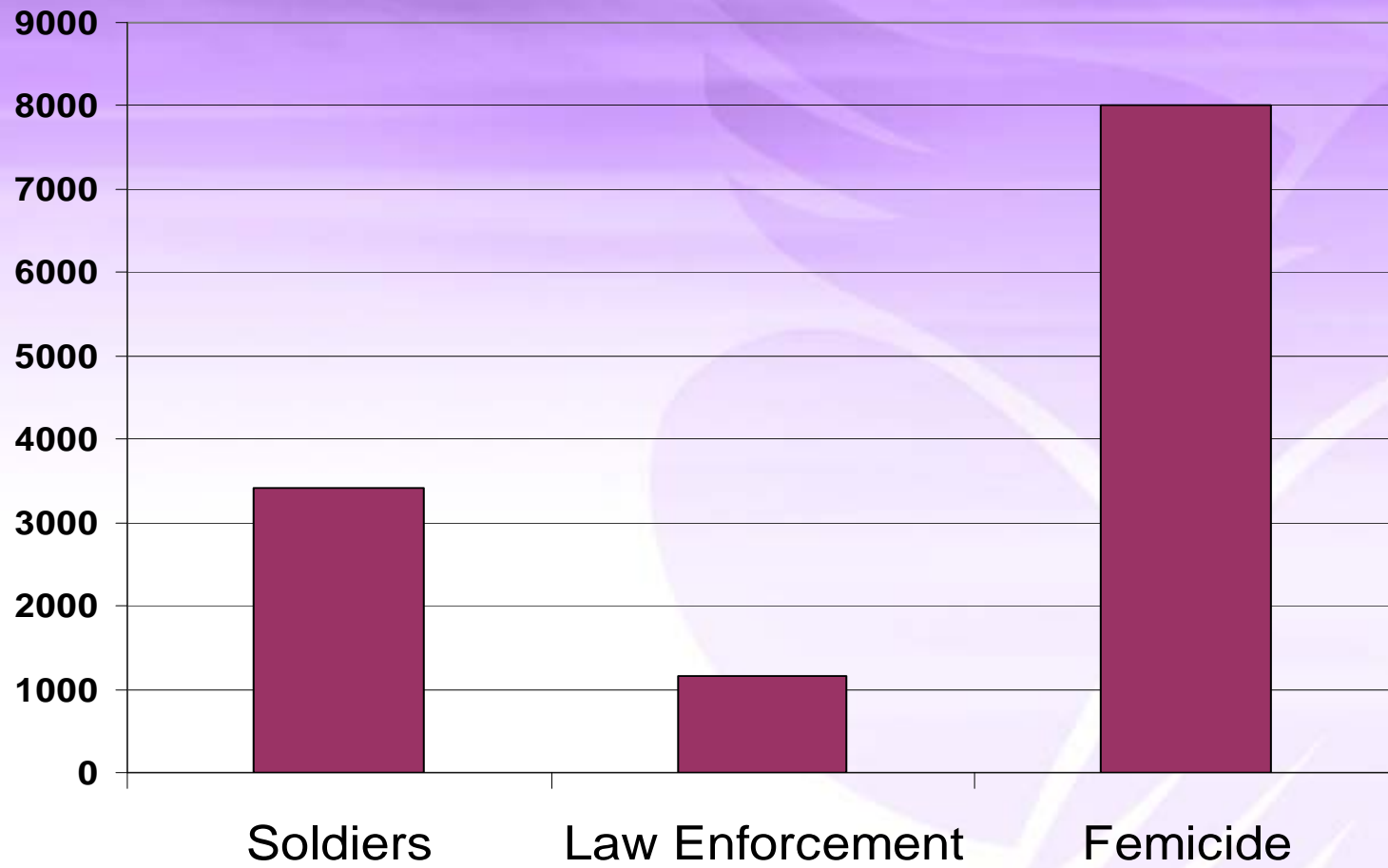
An Alberta Tragedy:

Liana White's life and the life of her unborn child ended tragically in July 2005. She was murdered by her husband, who was found guilty and is currently in serving time in prison. Their daughter Ashley now lives with her grandmother, Liana's mom.



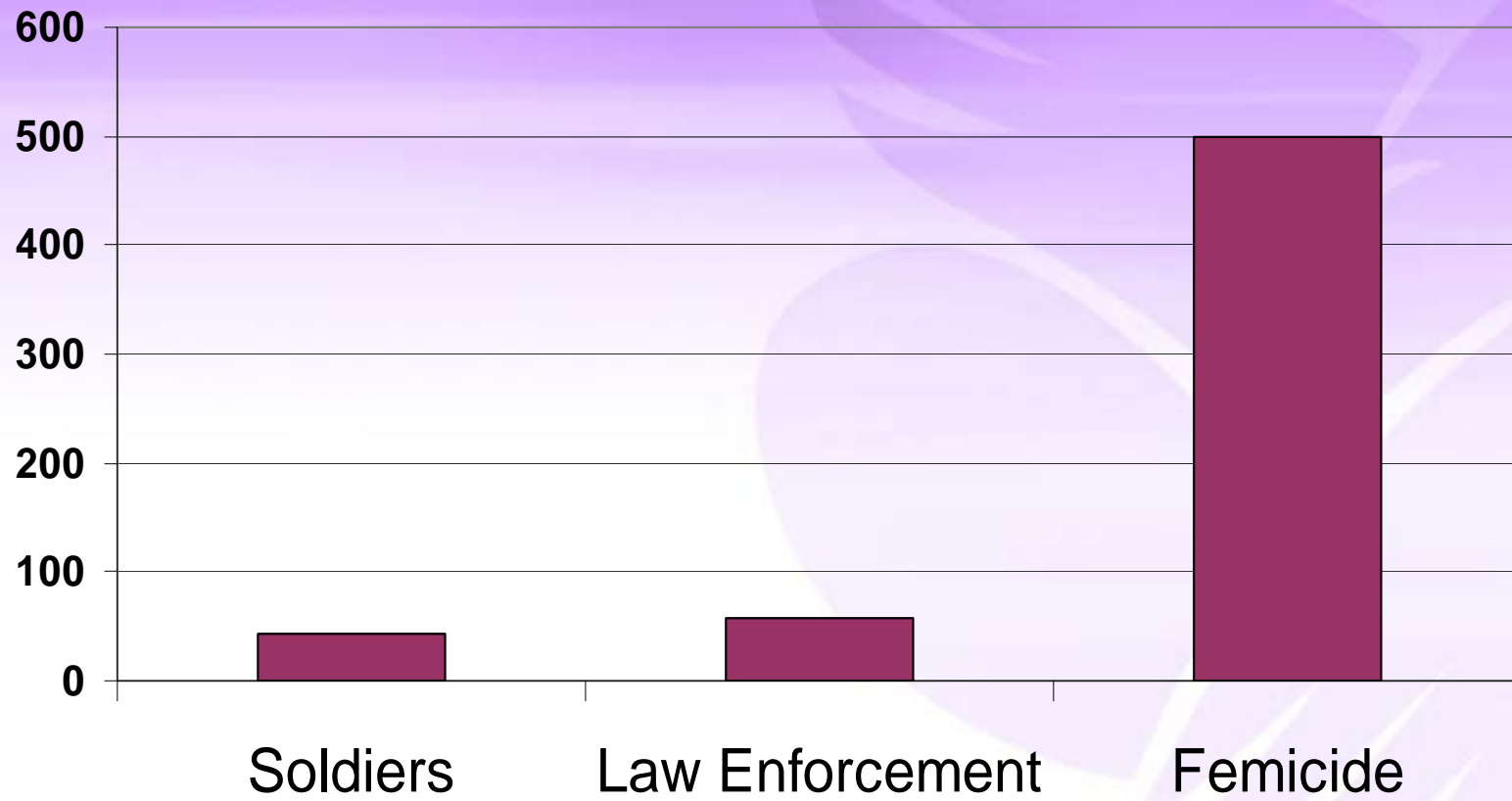
Number of American Individuals Killed 2000 – 2006

Data from Brian Vallee, *The War on Women*, (2007)



Number of Canadian Individuals Killed 2000 - 2006

Data from Brian Vallee, *The War on Women*, (2007)



USA Individuals Wounded in Battle vs. Domestic Assault 2000 - 2006

Data from Brian Vallee, *The War on Women*, (2007)



I was unaware of the staggering statistics.

Friend of Liana White



- Alberta leads provincially in domestic assault, homicide-suicide, stalking and is third in domestic homicide.
- From 2000 – 2006, over 170 homicides were domestic violence related (estimate). They represent about one third of all homicides in Alberta.
- There are approximately 8 attempted femicides for each femicide in Canada.
- Approximately 190 children/year are the first to find body or witnessed mother's murder/attempted murder.

I was unaware of the staggering statistics. . .

Friend of Liana White



During the 2007 – 2008 fiscal year, in Alberta:

- Over 12,000 women and children were resident in shelter.
- Over 14,000 women and children were turned away.
- Shelters received nearly 70,000 crisis calls.
- 50% of women admitted into Alberta emergency shelters self-identify as Aboriginal.

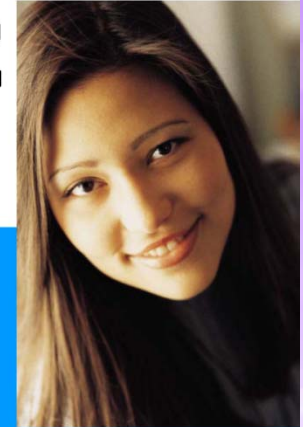
ACWS Responds: Danger Assessment in 9 Alberta Shelters



ACWS Research Shelters:

- Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society
- Eagle's Nest
- Bigstone Cree
- Sonshine
- Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
- WINGS
- A Safe Place
- Columbus House of Hope
- Peace River Regional Women's Shelter

WE INVITE YOU...



To help us with an exciting, province-wide research project to learn more about how shelters can help abused women to stay safe. We are asking women to participate by completing the Danger Assessment and a follow-up survey. All the information you provide is anonymous. In thanks for your time, a gift certificate will be provided upon completion of the research project.

PLEASE TALK TO YOUR SHELTER
WORKER FOR MORE INFORMATION



What is the Danger Assessment Tool?

- **Developed in 1985 to increase battered women's ability to take care of themselves.**
- Allows women to come to their own conclusions regarding safety.
- Interactive: uses a calendar that assists in recall.
- Instrument is a series of 20 weighted questions designed to measure risk in an abusive relationship.

Danger Assessment in 9 Alberta Shelters



Project Methodology

- Demographic data
- Calendar tool
- Danger Assessment tool
- Outcomes Measure tool and qualitative responses
- Focus groups
- Shelter staff survey
- Document research - ongoing

Project Outcomes

- Inform best practice in keeping women and children safe.
- Provide accurate, evidenced-based research for use with justice system and other stakeholders.
- Extend and deepen province-wide training on Danger Assessment in Alberta.

Danger Assessment in 9 Alberta Shelters



Project Data:

- 235 women total participants
- 198 calendars completed
- 180, on average, qualitative responses
- 4 focus groups
- Shelter staff survey on research implementation process.
- All shelter staff certified in using the Danger Assessment tool.

Sharon Gamblin

Demographics

The research became a tool to open up communication to do good work together.



Shelter staff

General information:

- Data gathered 1 November 2007 – 30 April 2008.
- Involved 9 shelters.
- N = 235
- 71% first time completing Danger Assessment.

The research became a tool to open up communication to do good work together.



Shelter staff

- Emergency shelter: 80% participants in shelter 1-5 times.
- Second stage shelter: 100% participants in shelter 1-5 times.
- 66% married or common-law
- 33% English Canadian; 51% Aboriginal self-identify.

The research became a tool to open up communication to do good work together.



Shelter staff

Abuse Types (top 5 of 16)	Aggregates
Verbal	91%
Psychological or emotional	91%
Physical	78%
Financial	75%
Threats	64%

The Calendar

*You actually see your own roller coaster ride;
it was on the calendar.*



Woman in shelter

- Documents severity of abuse, using a 1-5 rating scale.
- Additionally captures other forms of abuse: emotional, financial, sexual and spiritual.

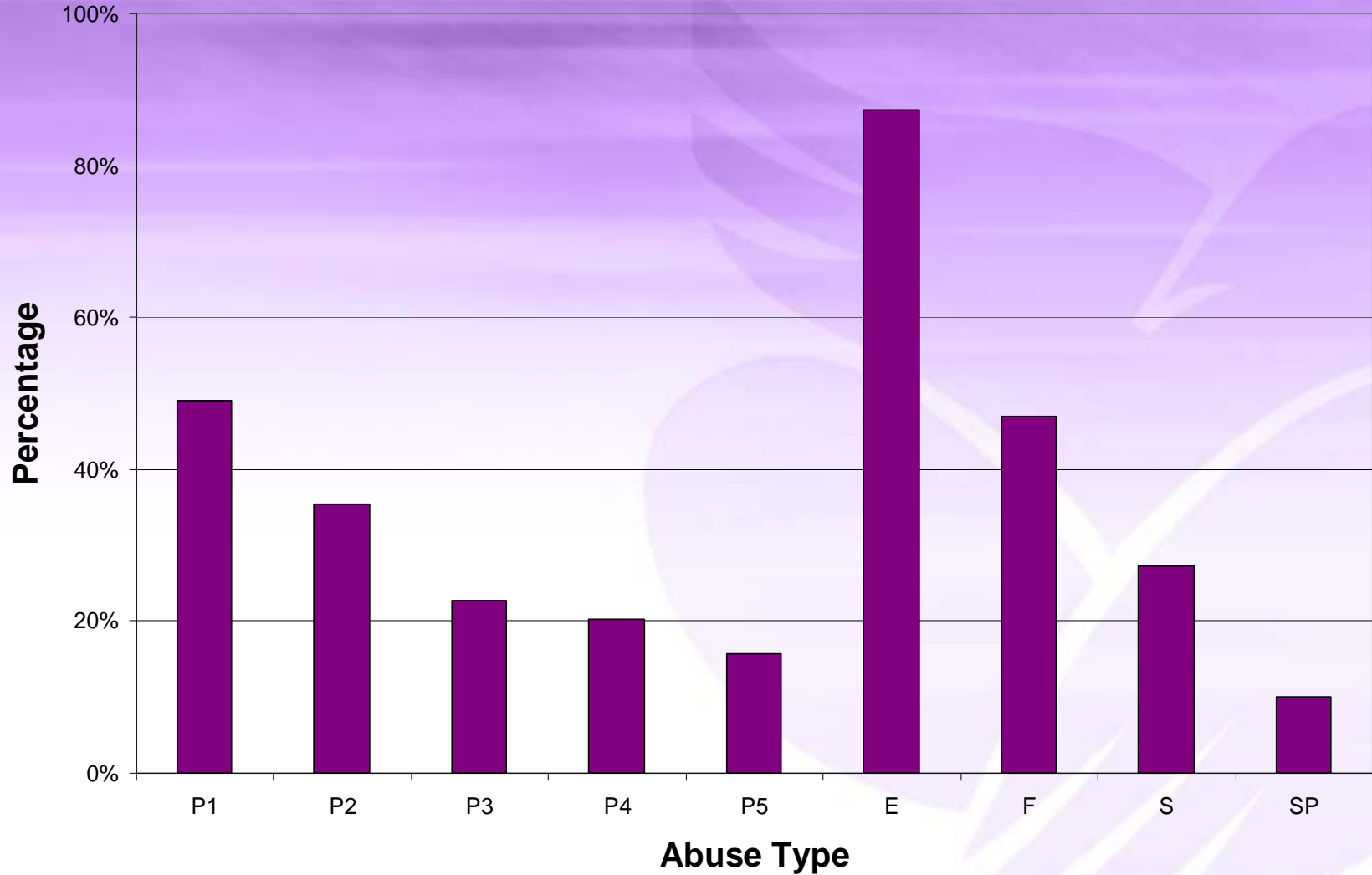
Month, Year

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

I know who I am, I am that woman who reached her breaking point, and after a good cry, I stood.

-Andrea Flicker

Percentage of Women Experiencing Abuse (N=198)



*You actually see your own roller coaster ride;
it was on the calendar.*

What the participants had to say:

- *I know now that he hurt me the most when I was pregnant.*
- *It was able to help me put a definite time as to when events have occurred instead of doubting my own judgment.*

Danger Assessment

It's helping me understand all these things I never knew before.



Woman in shelter

- Emergency shelter: 77% at severe or extreme danger.
- Second stage shelter: 83% at severe or extreme danger.

It's helping me understand all these things I never knew before.



Woman in shelter

(Paraphrased) Question	Emergency	Second stage
1. Physical violence increased?	62%	75%
2. Does he own a gun?	20%	4%
6. Does he threaten to kill you?	49%	79%
13. Control your daily activities?	78%	92%
15. Were you beaten while pregnant?	39%	50%
17. Threaten to harm your children?	17%	75%
18. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?	62%	75%

It's helping me understand all these things I never knew before.



Woman in shelter

What the participants had to say:

- *I felt nervous because to tell the truth I have not told anyone about what had happened before.*
- *Am I really in danger for my life with this man? Why won't anyone hear me?!! No one seems to really understand; they think it's me. How can I portray this to the people involved?*

Lenora Wiebe

Outcomes

ACWS Outcome Measures Tool



19 Question Survey

- Part 1 is a reflective pre-post comparison before and after completing the DA.
- Part 2 inquires about women's experience completing the calendar and DA, her safety, and plans for future.

First Line Incident

**ACWS Danger Assessment Research
Outcomes Data Collection Document**

INSTRUCTIONS: Please refer to the following scale when completing the questions below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very low	Low	Somewhat low	Neither low nor high	Somewhat high	High	Very High

BEFORE		rating	NOW		rating
1.	Rate your awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate your awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse now.	<input type="text"/>
2.	Rate your understanding of the level of danger before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate your understanding of the level of danger now.	<input type="text"/>
3.	Rate your knowledge of safety planning before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate your knowledge of safety planning now.	<input type="text"/>
4.	Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe now.	<input type="text"/>
5.	Rate your confidence that Women's Shelters can help before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate your confidence that Women's Shelters can help now.	<input type="text"/>
6.	Rate your level of hope before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate your level of hope now.	<input type="text"/>
7.	Rate the likelihood you would seek help from police before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate the likelihood you would seek help from police now.	<input type="text"/>
8.	Rate the likelihood you would seek help from Children's Services before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate the likelihood you would seek help from Children's Services now.	<input type="text"/>
9.	Rate the likelihood you would take action to keep your children safe before completing the Danger Assessment.	<input type="text"/>		Rate the likelihood you would take action to keep your children safe now.	<input type="text"/>

I had no idea. . . I thought things between us were normal.

Woman in shelter



Outcomes:

- We needed a way to track the difference participating in the research made on the ground, in the women's lives.
- Are you planning to return to your partner?
 - Emergency shelter: 85% NO
 - Second stage shelter: 78% NO

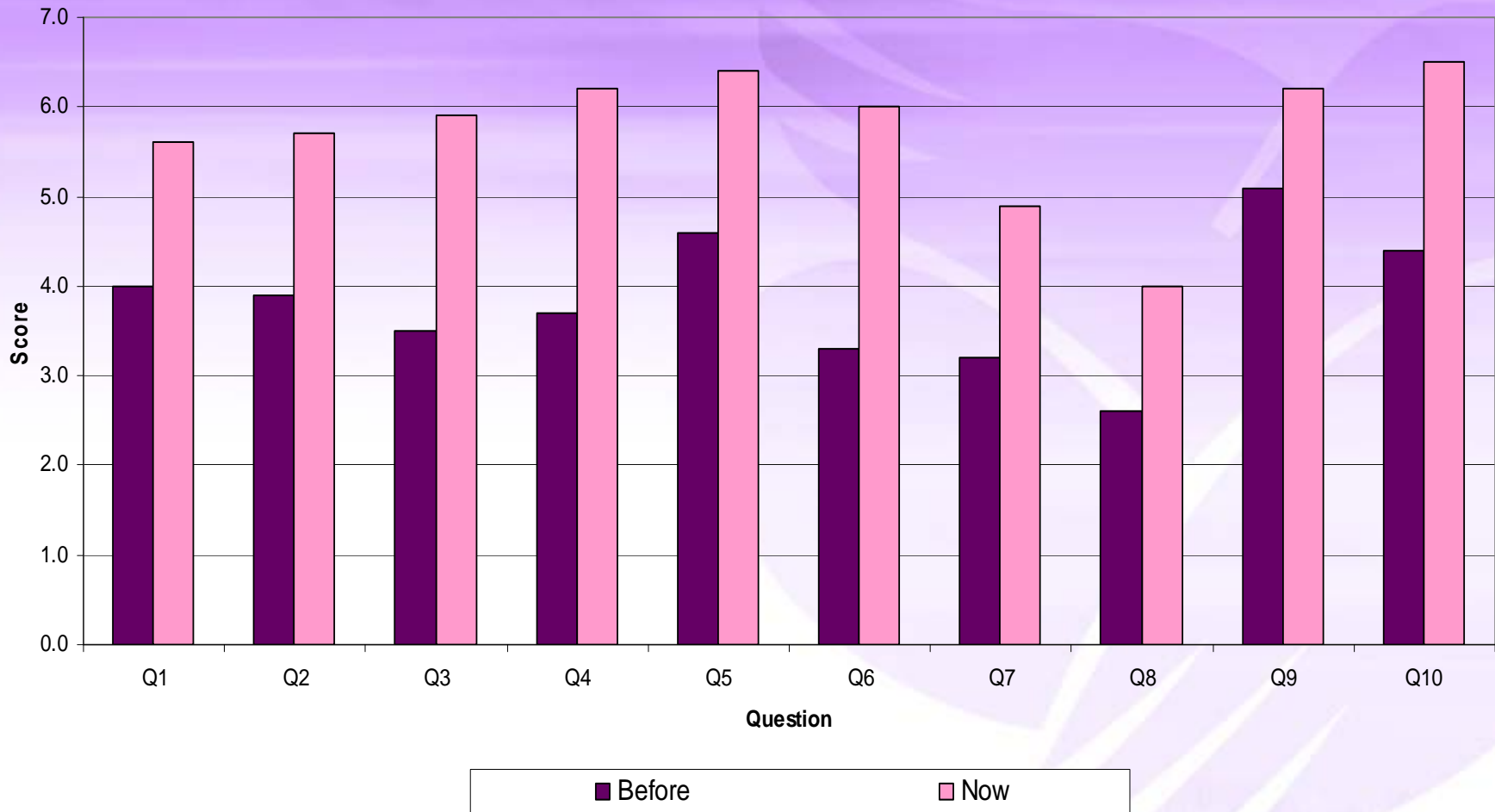
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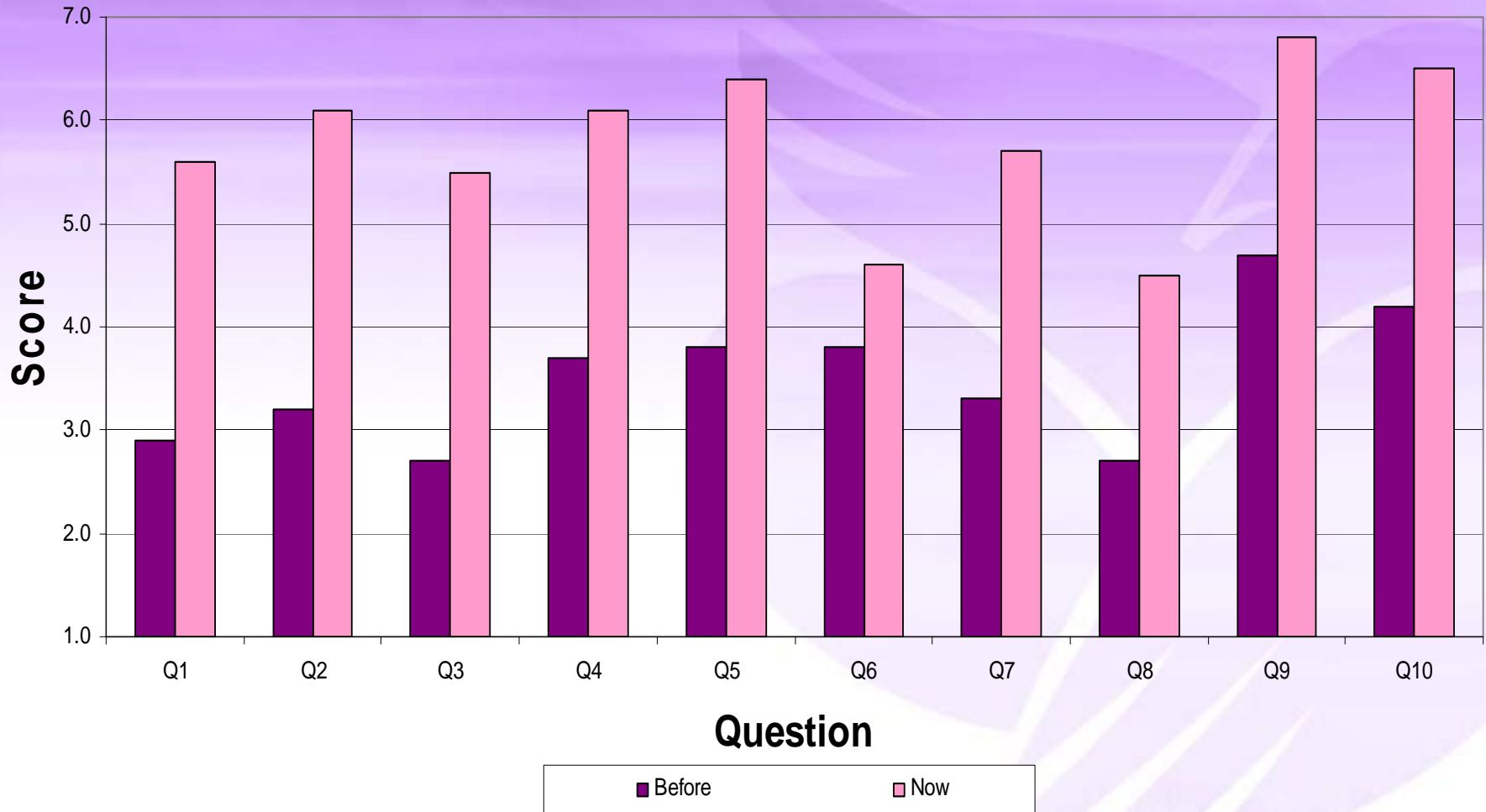
Woman in shelter

Question: Scale 1 - 7 (Rate your <i>awareness</i>. . . Before completing Danger Assessment tool and Now.) 4 of 10 questions	Emergency Shelters (averages)			Second Stage Shelters (averages)		
	Before	Now	Diff	Before	Now	Diff
4. Readiness to take action to stay safe.	3.7	6.2	2.5	3.7	6.1	2.4
5. Confidence in shelter to help.	4.6	6.4	1.8	3.8	6.4	2.6
6. Level of hope.	3.2	6.0	2.8	3.8	4.6	0.8
10. Confidence in decision to get help from shelter.	4.4	6.5	2.1	4.2	6.5	2.3

Emergency Shelter Outcomes Results



Second Stage Shelter Outcomes Results



I had no idea. . . I thought things between us were normal.

Woman in shelter



What women are doing about safety:

- *Know myself! Know my emergency contacts and transport methods. Know where all the documentation is, if immediate evacuation is imminent.*
- *Well, I want to be able to see my daughter grow. I want her to be able to be a little girl. I don't want to keep the cycle going. I want her to see good things while she grows up and not abuse.*

Shelter Staff Responses

You actually see your own roller coaster ride; it was on the calendar.

Woman in shelter



Danger Assessment Calendar:

Success:

- Working with the women on the calendar helped further the trust connection.

Challenge:

- It was heart-breaking to hear some of the stories.

You actually see your own roller coaster ride; it was on the calendar.

Woman in shelter  ACWS
Alberta Council of
Women's Shelters

Danger Assessment Calendar:

Innovative practice:

A crisis worker, during a group session, invited the women to fill in their own calendars individually, but while in the community of group work. This provided them with support and encouragement.

The result was notable: reluctance seemed to fade and the women encouraged one another to take on the painful task. They emerged from the session glad to have done the work.

It's helping me understand all these things I never knew before.

Woman in shelter



Danger Assessment Tool:

Success:

- Many women spoke frankly. It allowed them to open up without being asked to start any one place, but rather a simple yes or no which would open up conversation more easily.

Challenge:

- Women tend to minimize the abuse; overcoming fears about child welfare impacts.

It's helping me understand all these things I never knew before.

Woman in shelter



Danger Assessment Tool:

Innovative shelter practice:

We discovered that a few of the research shelters have created intake questions that, once answered, enable the woman to respond to the very tough 20 questions of the Danger Assessment tool.

I had no idea. . I thought things between us were normal.

Woman in shelter

Outcomes:

Successes:

- *Seeing the awareness they had after and the client being able to recognize it. It is knowledge they will take with them for a lifetime.*
- *You see change!*

Challenge:

- *Very confusing for women with low comprehension and literacy levels, even when the questions are read to them.*

I had no idea. .I thought things between us were normal.

Woman in shelter



Outcomes:

Innovative shelter practice:

One shelter color-coded all the different research forms—there were four of them!-- and this made it much easier to keep track of the women's progress through the process.

Dorothy Sam

Focus Groups

This research project addresses the image of NGOs as not knowing what they are doing.



Business participant

5 groups with an average of 8 participants each.

Direct interest in research:

- Want to meet again in next phase.
- Want to be informed about research results.
- Want report released in each community with media presence included.
- Want ACWS to provide community training on Danger Assessment.

This research project addresses the image of NGOs as not knowing what they are doing.



Business participant

Key themes:

Justice:

- Results of value to prosecutors, especially in terms of building the woman's motivation to give evidence in court.
- Useful for safe visitation issues.

Education:

- Need to integrate shelter expertise on children exposed to family violence and risk assessment to schools.

Community Service Providers:

- Interest in using shelter information to inform safety alert process.
- Funders interested in outcomes measurement capacity.

Preliminary Conclusions

It was really heart breaking, trying to revisit all those bad memories but I think it is going to be OK.



Woman in shelter

Trends to watch over the next research phase:

- **New awareness** of community supports and stakeholder commitment.
- The data continues to make the case that **shelters help**.
- Women are proactive about **safety** and in caring for themselves and their children.
- Women identify their need for access to **Second Stage** facilities.
- **On-reserve data** reveals important trends, such as over 80% of participants have tried to commit suicide.
- Many comments indicate a capacity to increase trust and hope for support from **Alberta's policing forces**.

Looking Ahead

I see now that you can heal when in a safe spot.



Woman in shelter

1. Train the Trainers: ACWS is piloting a T/t Danger Assessment program and developing transferable tools.
2. Shelters have garnered noticeable respect in their communities through this work and we will continue to build on this learning.

Thank you for your attention.