

Healing, Independence, and Stability after Abuse:

Housing Women and Children experiencing Domestic Violence

Carolyn Goard, M.A., C. Psych., Director of Member Supports and Services, Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Ebony Rempel, PhD(c), MSc, Executive Director, Odyssey House

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
October 25-27, 2017
Winnipeg, Manitoba



Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

ACWS serves as the collective voice for 48 sheltering organizations through:

- *Networking and information sharing* supporting development of leading practices;
- *Acquiring* adequate resources;
- *Undertaking research* to influence public policy & social change;
- *Increasing public awareness of* issues related to family violence;
- *Providing professional development* for Alberta's sheltering movement.



Domestic Violence is a major contributor to homelessness



According to a 2016 Statistics Canada Report, “Nearly one quarter of all women cited domestic abuse as a factor leading to their most recent housing loss. The number was higher for newcomer women [40%].” ¹⁶

Another Canadian study placed the number even higher, citing 38% of women who reported becoming homeless immediately after separating from violent partners. ¹⁷

Project Background

- Four year project involving ACWS and 12 Alberta Second-stage shelters
- Gathered information about women and children in Second-stage shelters
- Tracked services and supports that women and children received
- Analyzed the impact of second-stage shelter services on supporting women and children in their transition from abuse and homelessness to healing, independence and stability
- Funded by Canadian Women's Foundation; Calgary Foundation and IODE



Project Activities

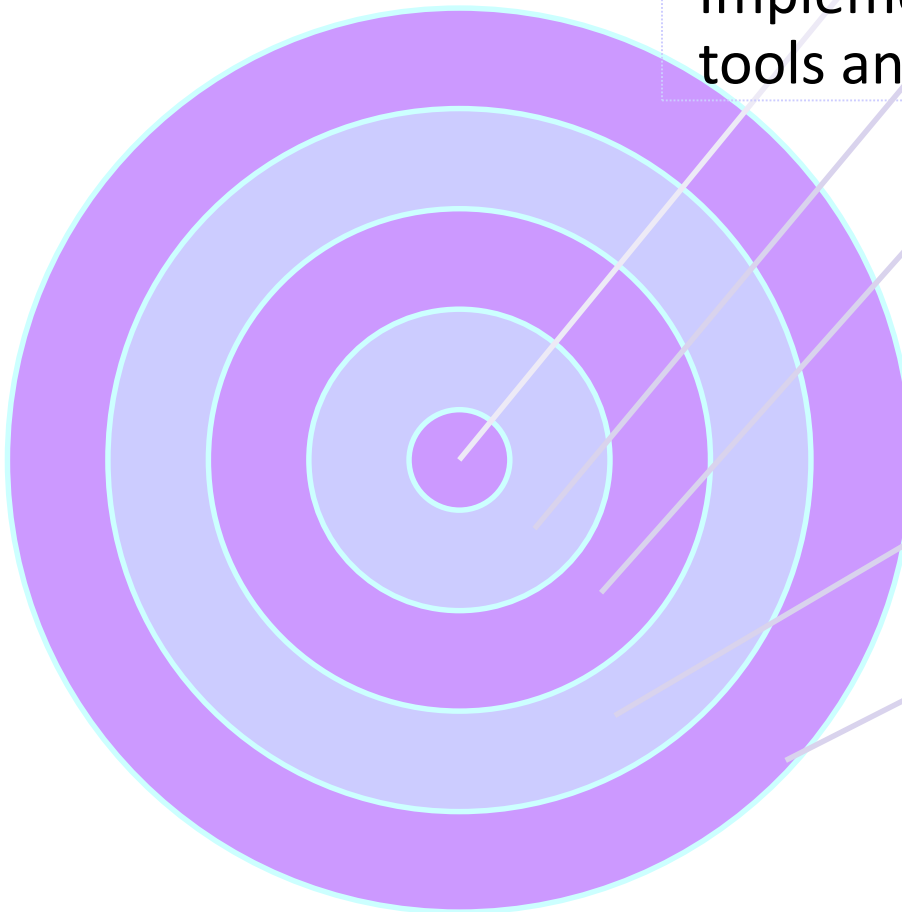
Promising Practice Literature
Review; Second-stage logic model

Implementation of new data collection
tools and Phase I Report

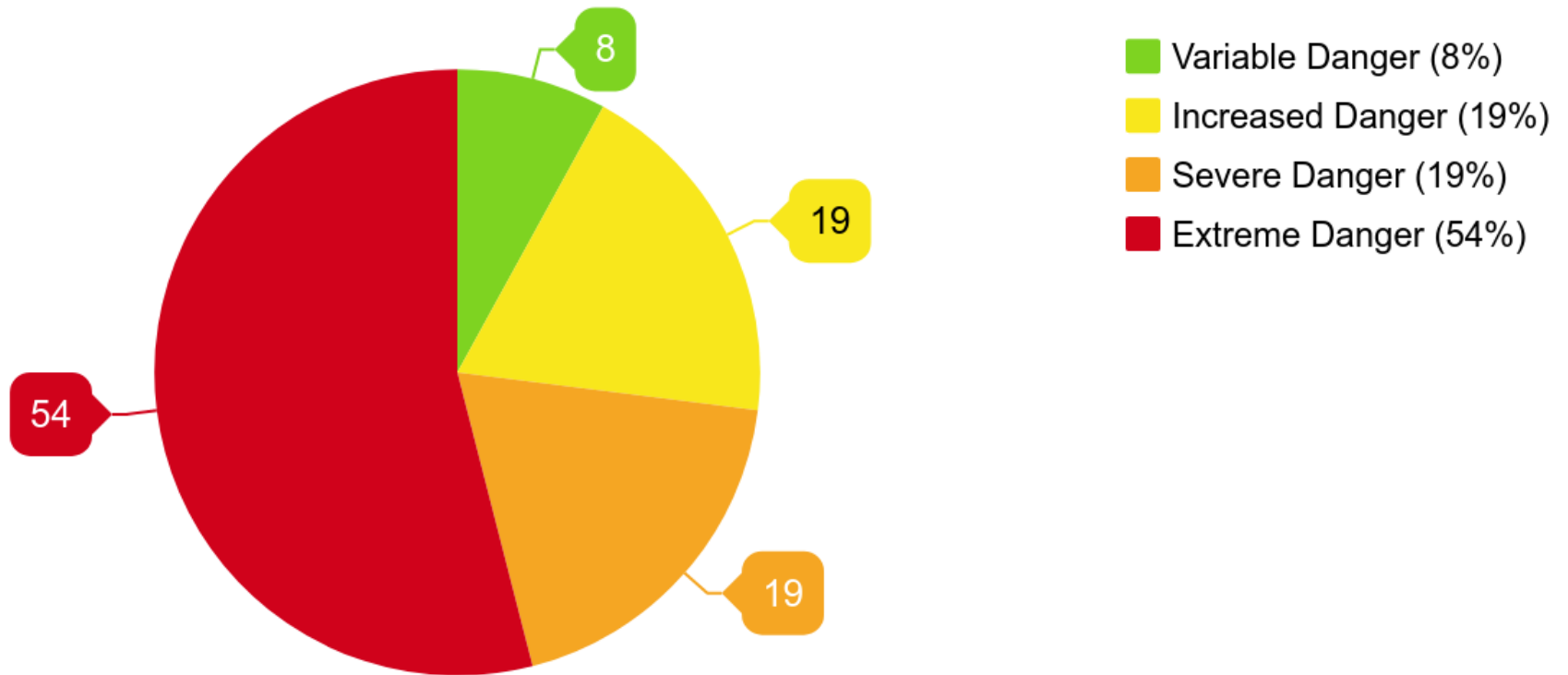
Tool development, training and
development of the Acuity
Scale

Staff and Client
Interviews

Phase II Report, continued
data collection & quarterly
data reviews



Danger Assessment Scores for Women in Second-Stage Shelters



Who uses second stage shelters



The average age of women in shelter is 35 years old.

87% of women were accompanied by children.

60% had two or more children.

49% of children were preschool age.

35% had current or previous involvement with Children's Services.

24% of women in second stage shelters immigrated to Canada.

35% of women in second stage shelters were Aboriginal.

67% were homeless or living in short-term accommodations.





Upon entering shelter, 65% of women had one or more health concerns



40% report physical health concerns



33% faced addiction issues



22% suffered severe injuries from their perpetrator



54% faced trauma & mental health issues

Injuries included:

- broken bones
- bruises
- cuts/abrasions
- stab wounds
- neck injuries from strangulation
- head injuries/concussions
- miscarriages
- internal organ injury
- chronic mobility impairment
- eye trauma
- hearing loss



11% were seriously considering suicide



27% of children had a disability, mental or physical health concern

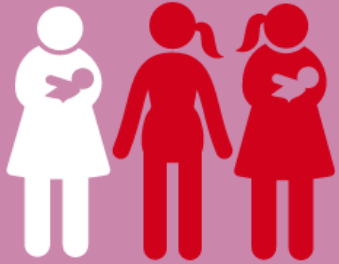
Upon Entering:



17% had been living in stable housing.

When Leaving:

55% were moving into stable housing.



67% had been homeless or living in short-term housing.

9% were moving into short-term housing or became homeless.



46% had been living with their abuser before emergency shelter.

6% planned to move back in with their abusive partner.



Positive Outcomes

At the end of their stay:

87% of women were able to achieve progress on at least one of their goals.

Over 80% of women were satisfied with the services they received.

Over half of women were moving into stable housing when they left shelter.

Only 6% were planning to return to their abusive partners.

At follow-up:

79% were living on their own (this compared to 67% who were homeless when entering shelter).



Conclusion

This project :

- Clearly described characteristics of women and children in Second-stage shelters
- Developed an Acuity scale quantifying the complexity of women's needs
- Implemented data collection and analysis informing service delivery
- Demonstrated positive impact on women's well being and safe transition
- Situated Second-stage shelters as an essential service within the continuum of housing and homeless supports

