

Frequently Asked Questions Review of Sexual Violence and Harassment Counselling Services & Helplines

1. What is the purpose of this review?

The purpose of the sexual violence and harassment counselling services and helplines review is to improve services and better meet the needs of survivors 16 years and older in Ontario. Survivors will be invited to share their experiences of what was helpful, what barriers got in the way of receiving help or what services were missing, and what supports for survivors could be better coordinated or integrated. Service providers will also be invited to share their expertise of what works well and what changes may be needed to better support survivors.

2. Will all services providers/survivors have the opportunity to provide input or will it just be a select few? How were these agencies selected?

Survivors will participate in 10 survivor group sessions held across the province and as many as 30 service providers will be interviewed. Survivors and service providers will be selected based on criterion (i.e., geography, types of counselling services and helplines and diversity/intersecting identities) to obtain a representative sample. A small working group of provincial organizations /services providers and research experts will be invited to help develop an approach with survivors.

Additionally, we are offering an online survey where survivors and service providers can share their experiences in a safe, confidential manner. Starting in May 2017 the surveys can be accessed online:

Ontario.ca/survivorsvoices / Ontario.ca/voixdessurvivantes
surveys.shore.ca/serviceprovidersvoices / surveys.shore.ca/voixdesfournisseursdeservices

3. Will this review result in service and program cuts?

The purpose of the review is to improve services for survivors - not to reduce the funding envelope for the broader system of counselling services and helplines. We know it is important for survivors to have choices in services. However, we have heard there are often long waiting lists for some services and access to services for some diverse populations is limited. One of the desired outcomes of the review is to find ways to better meet needs of survivors of sexual violence and/or harassment.

4. Will a summary of findings of the review be made available to service users?

The intent of the review is to provide program ministries and the Ministry of the Status of Women (formerly the Ontario Women's Directorate) with critical information about survivors' experiences with an eye to improving services. Key findings with no identifying information will

be shared with selected advisory bodies, such as the Minister's Violence Against Women Roundtable.

5. Where will the group sessions with survivors be held?

Survivor group sessions will be held in Ottawa, Sudbury, Toronto, Windsor and Belleville-Quinte. Locations of survivor groups for Indigenous communities are still being determined.

6. Who is organizing the group sessions with survivors?

A working group of provincial violence against women organizations and key research experts will help roll out the plan. Indigenous partner organizations will provide oversight with the engagement of survivors from Indigenous communities.

7. Who is/will be part of the survivor groups?

The sessions are targeted to survivors ages 16 years and over with intersectional identities, including immigrant women, Indigenous women, Francophone women, women with disabilities, LGBTI+ community, elderly women, women from northern communities, and men to ensure that we hear the voices from a wide range of survivors.

8. How will the Review ensure we hear from survivors who have not received support from the funded agencies?

An online survey will be promoted publicly and through social media to broaden the reach of the review.

Starting in May 2017 the surveys can be accessed at:

Ontario.ca/survivorsvoices or Ontario.ca/voixdessurvivantes

9. How will you support very vulnerable survivors?

Service providers who help promote, recruit and support the survivors will ask participants for their accessibility and family needs and ensure their needs are met to enable their participation.

10. Will the survivor group sessions cause further harm to the survivors that participate?

The Review is survivor centred. Survivors know best what services have been of benefit and which have fallen short. It is critical to provide them with the opportunity to share their experiences and give them the opportunity to describe what worked well and what could be improved.

Shore Consulting and the Ministry of the Status of Women are working with provincial violence against women organizations and research experts to help develop an implementation guide for survivor engagement that is sensitive to their needs.

Local service providers in specific communities across the province can help survivors determine whether they feel emotionally safe and ready to participate in a survivor group setting and also to support them in thinking over the potential risks and benefits of their participation.

11. How will survivors who participate in the focus groups be supported later when some of these services have long waiting lists?

Ensuring survivors' needs are thoroughly considered will be critical for the safety of participants. Service providers can help survivors consider the potential risks and benefits of their participation so that those who feel emotionally safe and ready can participate in the focus group setting.

As a further support, the group participants will have a counsellor/elder on site to offer support should they need these before, during or after their participation. To help with mitigating the risk of waiting lists, survivors can call local and provincial crisis lines for immediate support.