

# Survivor



Welcoming  
women  
to make  
change.



Calling on services  
and policymakers  
to include survivors  
in their work.



Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

# V i c e s

# Survivor Voices

## Welcoming women to make change

**Calling on services and policymakers to  
include survivors of woman abuse in their work.**

**The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)**

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## Acknowledgements

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This report is dedicated to all women and children who live with the experience of woman abuse in Ontario. It is also written in remembrance and honour for the hundreds of women and children murdered by men.

This document was written by Eileen Morrow, Coordinator of OAITH.

## Table of Contents

Summary . . . . .	vii
 Section 1: The Survivor Voices Project. . . . .	 1
Background . . . . .	1
What is the Survivor Voices project? . . . . .	1
The Advisory Committee . . . . .	2
Activities of the project. . . . .	3
Women’s meetings. . . . .	4
Surveys . . . . .	5
 Section 2: What Survivor Voices Say . . . . .	 6
Women’s experiences of services and systems . . . . .	6
The services and systems survivors would improve . . . . .	6
Equity and access issues . . . . .	7
The kinds of improvements women want . . . . .	8
Some concerns for survivors—and their advice for change . . . . .	9
Including survivor voices for positive change. . . . .	13
How women see themselves being involved . . . . .	13
Survivors finding ways to share their ideas . . . . .	14
What keeps women from participating? . . . . .	15
Survivor advice on the best ways to include women . . . . .	17
10 ‘best practices’ for services that want to hear from survivors. . . . .	18
Just ask me! . . . . .	19
Getting respect . . . . .	19
Getting results . . . . .	20
Words of welcome . . . . .	21
Women appreciate having a voice . . . . .	21
 Section 3: What next? . . . . .	 22
How services and systems can help . . . . .	22
How government can help . . . . .	23
Final word . . . . .	23

## Summary

Survivor Voices is a project, undertaken by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) in 2007/08, that over the period of about a year, sought out the ideas, insights and advice of woman abuse survivors about participating in policy development and systemic change.

The goal of the project was:

1. To gather the advice of survivors on how to include their voices in the work to end woman abuse.
2. To call on community systems and services to welcome, and listen to, the voices of woman abuse survivors on improving their response.

The planning and creation of tools to gather the information from women was guided by an Advisory Committee of 10 women from across Ontario who had experienced woman abuse by their partners.

We used two ways of gathering information from women:

- Group meetings of women in 11 communities in Ontario
- Written and online surveys for women to fill out

Shelters and some other services that work with survivors in Ontario sponsored and facilitated the meetings using tools created by the planners.

One hundred and forty-nine survivors attended women's group meetings organized for the project in Atikokan, Barrie, Carleton Place, Collingwood, Kincardine, Oshawa, Ottawa, Owen Sound, Red Lake, Toronto and Woodstock.

One hundred and sixty-three women answered the survey. Surveys from women who indicated their geographical location came from over 43 different communities across Ontario.

### What women said

Survivors first identified some services/systems they would like to improve. In the survey results, women chose police, social assistance and low-income housing as the top three that they would pick. Women attending the meetings focussed on police, courts (family and criminal) and social assistance as their top three, followed closely by child welfare.

Women didn't stop there, however. In their assessment—the one that really matters—virtually every response to woman abuse in Ontario could use help to improve practices, attitudes and policies. And there are still gaps in services women have identified.

Survivors also want to be part of the picture. They know from experience, which they describe in this report, where the gaps and traps are in systems and policies. They see themselves as important agents: making decisions, sitting on Boards and committees, organizing groups and community political activities to raise awareness and taking on the leadership role survivors used to have over 30 years ago, and still want to continue today.

Survivors listed numerous ways that they could participate in leading the way to improvements in response to woman abuse in Ontario—from sharing their stories with other women to organizing independent survivor groups and activities to raise awareness and speak out about their concerns.

Some women already take leadership and mentoring roles in their communities, but over 70% of women who answered our surveys either didn't

know they could be involved, didn't think the systems or services wanted or valued their opinions, or faced serious practical barriers to participation.

The most common barriers were lack of childcare and money to pay for things like transportation. The sheer complexity and level of activity women have to maintain to survive and get access to the services they need also prevents some of them from taking on anything else that they might want to do. The impact of violence on themselves and their children also sometimes creates seemingly insurmountable obstacles. But it doesn't make them give up trying.

Survivors identify anxiety about engaging with services and systems they feel are often disrespectful, disbelieving and discriminatory. They need to feel welcome in order to enter into helping services improve. The most common sign of welcome survivors mention is simply being asked to join in the work. After the initial invitation, however, women also want to know they will get compassion, respect and results. That they will be valued.

Women who participated in this project remain interested. Some of the women's meeting groups continue to plan activities and discussions. Ninety-five women who answered our survey are awaiting a copy of the report, and 96 women have indicated that they want to stay involved.

Based on the information we received from women, OAITH is calling on community systems and services to support women in these ways:

1. Reach out to women in all the ways they have listed—both personally and publicly—and invite them into local processes.
2. Provide budgetary and practical support for participation of survivors in service evaluation, development and coordination processes.
3. Support survivors who want to gather independently and provide supportive assistance and in-kind services such as room space, office supplies, materials and technological support.
4. Provide organizational and facilitation support to survivors who ask for this type of assistance to start their own groups and activities.

For the Province of Ontario, we call for these steps:

1. Look at the comments and concerns of survivors outlined in this report and consider the thousands of women and children across Ontario who share those experiences and opinions about social program and public system gaps and needed enhancements.
2. Develop ways to reach out as policy makers and legislators to survivors like the women in this project and find ways to welcome them into consultation and government policy development processes.
3. Fund the activities of survivors and services that want to support survivor involvement in their evaluative and development work.
4. Fund survivors who want or organize together in their own groups and on their own independent projects to raise awareness of current issues and recommendations from women who have experienced violence.
5. Move forward on one of the Step it Up Campaign measures outlined in the campaign Platform for Parties, released prior to the 2007 provincial election campaign. Under the Platform section on supporting the advocacy and expertise of survivors and women's advocates, the Platform urged the Province to provide "\$1.5 million annually to support engagement and participation of survivors of violence with local, regional and provincial women's services and advocacy groups."



## Section 1: The Survivor Voices Project

### Background

Survivors are at the heart of change to end violence against women. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, energized by the civil rights and women's liberation movements, Ontario women who experienced intimate violence began to talk. They talked to each other and to feminist activists.

Then, talking about violence against women was radical.

One of the first slogans of the time was *"Break the Silence,"* a message that spoke volumes about the disbelief, victim-blaming and lack of support in women's lives. But women didn't just talk, they acted to help create their own services: Women's shelters, rape crisis centres, women's centres and neighbourhood groups.

These agencies were different because they welcomed survivors to work with other women, and created a sophisticated equality rights analysis of violence against women that has guided our work ever since.

Over the past 30 years in Ontario, the work of those early leaders has created an impressive network of independent women-centred community services. It has also sparked changes throughout community systems that before had failed women. Those changes have been well documented and their effectiveness evaluated to greater or lesser degrees.

One change has not been so widely discussed: The decrease in ongoing survivor involvement and leadership in the response to intimate woman abuse.

As systems have become more engaged and services more 'professionalized'—even within women's grassroots agencies—fewer self-identified current and recent survivors have found their way into leadership positions on policy and program delivery.

To be sure, many survivors of woman abuse still work within shelters and other women's organizations and, of course, wherever there are women working within systems, there will be survivors as well. But many women who want to contribute are still excluded, or consulted only briefly (as we ourselves have done in this project).

### What is the Survivor Voices project?

Survivor Voices is a project undertaken by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) in 2007/08 that sought out the ideas, opinions and advice of woman abuse survivors about participating in policy development and systemic change.

Over a period of approximately one year, the Association invited and brought together survivor expertise to prepare some guidance to local communities and provincial policy makers on how to welcome survivors into our ongoing work to end violence against women.

Members of the OAITH Social Justice and Action Committee (SJAC) were the project planning group. We had identified the need to reach out to survivors after looking at the history of our own work to end violence against women in Ontario. We knew that survivors were critical to the building of

*Educate each person in society that this still goes on in today's world, and as long as we ignore the circumstances, we will continue to see no progress.*

— Northern Ontario

*Provide more funding for these services because they are so important at such a devastating time.*

— Unknown location

*We do feel some places go above and beyond, but many services don't seem to help or want to make it easier to put our lives back together or to get back on our feet. We didn't ask to be hurt in any way. Help make us stronger. We can do it all together some day. The future holds a lot of changes.*

— Northern Ontario

*Give women a place/chance to have their histories heard by the public.*

— Greater Toronto Area

*The systems that are supposed to help are often a maze of complex processes. Women who are trying to leave an abusive relationship need to be supported in their efforts to find help.*

— Greater Toronto Area

*They need to trust us more...we left the abusive situation for a reason, and we only have our child(ren's) best interest in mind. They are our future and we don't want to have the violence continue.*

— Central Ontario

*Tell survivors by getting involved and being a voice heard can empower them. What a difference it has made in my life and how I have really made a difference and in turn have turned something horrific into a positive part of my life by being able to flush the bad emotional component and turn that into positive energy—to be able to be strong enough to stand up in front of an audience and tell my story and what they can do to see the signs etc. So really let them know how getting involved helps them.*

— Greater Toronto Area

women's shelters. And that central to shelter work is accountability to women and the belief that women are the experts in their own lives.

The SJAC members recognized from their own experience in shelters that recent survivors are less involved in hands-on ways, particularly within large systems that are difficult to penetrate and that in some cases, survivors are never seriously asked for their ideas on how to improve services. We knew this was not the result of a perfect response to woman abuse where no further improvement was needed.

Instead, we believed this change was a barrier to effective action and slowed progress on ending woman abuse. The goal of the project, therefore was:

1. To gather the advice of survivors on how to include their voices in the work to end woman abuse.
2. To call on community systems and services to welcome, and listen to, the voices of woman abuse survivors on improving their response.

We wanted to revive participation of current and recent survivors in our joint work. We also wanted to support other services that believe in hearing the voices of those most affected by violence against women.

In early 2007, the SJAC developed a plan to ask women who were interested in getting more involved to share their insights about how systems and services could more effectively make contact with them, and how the systems should include these women in policy and program development.

### The Advisory Committee

The committee also invited survivors to join in an advisory committee to our own work. In summer 2007, shelters distributed an invitation to women in their programs. Ten women eventually formed the advisory committee and met together in November 2007 to begin the project.



Members of the Survivor Voices Advisory Committee and our French translator. Some faces have been altered for reasons of confidentiality.



Advisory Committee members live in communities across Ontario and represent women's experiences from a number of perspectives, both of geography and social location (income level, race, culture, language, ability, age, etc.). All have left abusive situations and still face challenges as they rebuild their own lives.

Because our budget was limited, the Advisory Committee could only meet once in person and then participate in teleconference 'meetings' for the rest of the project. They discussed ways to reach out to other survivors and reviewed/edited materials drafted for gathering women's ideas. Several of them also reviewed this report.

Because the lives of recent survivors of woman abuse can be unpredictable—and women must often live on low incomes and move around—participation on the Committee was sometimes uneven. Some women experienced crisis events during the project and needed to take time to respond to them. We know Committee members had to struggle to make time for the project. We used 'snail mail' to send materials and notices of meetings since most women don't necessarily have the techno gear advocates are used to using within services and systems.

We learned from our own experience about some of the supports women need to participate. We also learned how vital the information provided by the Committee was to our success in the project. We are grateful to these women for the advice and time they gave to help us.

## Activities of the project

We used two ways of gathering information:

- Group meetings of women
- Written and online surveys

A brochure outlining the project and the ways for women to participate was created and distributed throughout the shelter network in Ontario. Shelters were encouraged to promote and distribute the information further within their communities so that women might hear about it in other ways.

Materials created for the project included:

- A project brochure
- Tips on promoting the project in the community
- A meeting 'kit', including a facilitator guide and meeting format, adaptable flyer for giving notice of meetings, meeting questions to consider, a draft meeting agenda and meeting evaluation form, tips on organizing a meeting for women and a PowerPoint presentation about the project and its goals.
- Online and written surveys, the survey was posted on the OAITH website.

All project materials were translated into French.

To ensure consistency, the same questions/topic areas were used for both methods. All materials were reviewed in draft form by the Advisory Committee before being used in the project.

The meetings and questions were not intended to gather information about women's personal experiences of violence or the ways in which systems and services may have responded to them. Women shared and ana-

*After my initial call when my ex threatened my life, it took 6 days for an officer to call and take my statement. It took another 13 days for them to politely ask my ex to come to see them. He (working at RCMP) convinced police I made the whole thing up. An arrest warrant for public mischief was put out for me. Through this whole ordeal I never met in person with any police officer.*

— Eastern Ontario

*While we were in a shelter awaiting housing, anytime I would call housing or OW I would have to wait days (sometimes a whole week) to get an answer. If one of the staff of the shelter would call, they usually got an answer the same day.*

— Eastern Ontario

*I have to have some surgery done soon and when I went to see my doctor, she told me it would be better for me to return to my husband, especially with the pending surgery. I lived with this abusive man for 40 years and finally found the strength to leave. After all that, I get told to return by my doctor. Do they even get it?*

— Central Ontario

If a mother is working and uses day care, she needs help to pick up children from day care because they can only be in day care for up to nine hours. If the mother works out of town or works shift work, then she relies on the abusive partner to help at some point. This makes the choice to leave very difficult because the resources don't follow each other. Have to work to pay for day care. Can't work UNLESS you have daycare in place. So you are stuck.

— Southwestern Ontario

Easy access, treat women with more respect. More access to funds for things you need to keep safe. It is hard enough to leave, but when you are treated with so much paper work, degraded and denied the funding you need, which you're thankful for, but never covers everything. It makes you question why you left, or it makes it impossible to leave. And this is why a lot of lives are lost, because help is not there, or just impossible or painstaking to get. It is degrading enough to ask, let alone go throw so many hoops.

— Unknown location



Women meet to discuss their experiences and suggestions for services/systems

lyzed their experiences, however, as a way to bridge into discussions about how they could contribute to improving responses to woman abuse.

### Women's meetings

One hundred and forty-nine survivors attended women's group meetings organized for the project. Meetings with survivors took place in 11 different locations from North to South: Atikokan, Barrie, Carleton Place, Collingwood, Kincardine, Oshawa, Ottawa, Owen Sound, Red Lake, Toronto and Woodstock.

In some communities, more than one meeting was organized so that women could come during the day or evening, or so that women both in the shelter and in the community could participate. In Woodstock, for example, organizers used the local newspaper to advertise the women's meeting. In others, a flyer was distributed and posted giving notice of the event. In Owen Sound, women attended a summer barbeque and meeting.

All of the women's meetings were sponsored by women's shelters or community-based services specifically for woman abuse survivors, most by women's shelters.

Organizers were encouraged to provide ways for women, if they wanted, to remain connected with each other after the meeting. Women who wanted to make links with each other shared contact information. In some sites, women planned additional meetings for more activities.

Survivors who participated included Aboriginal women, women of colour, immigrant women, women with disabilities, Francophone women, women from different regions of the province, women of different ages, mothers and single women. Although invitations to meetings were open ended, particular efforts were made to encourage participation by marginalized women, especially Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, immigrant

women and Francophone women.

Organizers shouldered the costs and time resources needed to hold the meetings. Where they were not able to cover costs, OAITH provided financial support. For the most part, however, women shelters and support agencies paid the expenses for facilitation, room rental, tokens of appreciation for all participants, reproduction of materials and refreshments. Without their support, the project could not have succeeded.

## Surveys

One hundred and sixty-three women answered a survey prepared by the project. Surveys from women who indicated their geographical location came from over 43 different communities across Ontario.

Survivors responding to the survey had the option to provide personal contact information in order to receive a copy of the final report and to indicate whether or not they would be interested in any future participation in Survivor Voices work.

The surveys encouraged women to provide ideas and comments in either online or hard copy written format. Questions were short and included options for women to consider, as well as providing open-ended opportunities for sharing additional information and advice. A copy of the survey questions is attached at the end of this report.

Organizations interested in the project were encouraged to create opportunities for women to go online to fill out the surveys and/or to provide hard copies for women who might want to participate in writing. The survey was also provided on the OAITH website.

Women were not asked to disclose any specific demographic information or details about the abuse they had experienced, or to identify their geographic or social location, although many of them did.

*We really need more affordable housing. I think one of the reasons a lot of woman (especially ones with children) stay in bad relationships is they have no place to go, or the places they can afford are run down and not satisfactory or safe for the woman, let alone the kids.*

— Central Ontario

*The woman victim should have a "paid legal advocate" to go through with her all the procedures she is dragged through by agencies supposedly supporting her rights independently of each other. Give women time to heal from abuse before abusers take advantage of them through legal court proceedings.*

— Central Ontario

*Based on my experience, organizations don't communicate with each other. One resource doesn't have current information on the others and are simply willing to give you yet another phone number to call. If you are not at a residence and don't have access to a cell phone, that may not be an option. As well, if you don't know where to access information—there are limited places to find it—people don't know where to start.*

— West Central Ontario



I am currently a Board Member of a woman's shelter, and continue to participate in purple ribbon campaigns within my community. I assist women who are in need of someone to talk to because many years ago that woman was me. I am currently working towards my BSW designation. I have not had an easy time of things, however I believe that when women join together in helping one another we form a very strong force that can move mountains.

— South Central Ontario

I would tell services how a victim of abuse sees the system/ services and their employees. I would let them know how to speak to a victim of abuse without alienating her or making her feel like there is something "wrong" with her. I would let them know times of crisis are important, but equally important are the years that follow when it seems there is no more help because there is no immediate danger.

— Greater Toronto Area

Make these services more aware of the continued abuse in the family court system. I was traumatized by my husband, then by the criminal court system and I am continuing to be abused by the very family court system that is supposed to help me. He has continued to manipulate the system for his continued abuse.

— Eastern Ontario

## Section 2: What Survivor Voices Say

### Women's experiences of services and systems

The Survivor Voices project was intended to reach women who had ideas and suggestions to share about improving services and systems.

It is no surprise, then, that the women who contributed to our knowledge were interested in sharing frustrations and challenging experiences of the systems and in urging needed changes.

Information shared in the Survivor Voices project focusses on the ongoing need to improve our work and to continually check with women about where we are and where we need to go from here. Unfortunately, in many ways, the comments of survivors in this project were sadly familiar to those made on many occasions by women over the past 30 years.

We are aware, of course, that over 30 years of work by survivors, women's advocates and policymakers within both systems and government has initiated a broad range of positive steps in response to women and children all over Ontario. We have a lot to celebrate.

There is still a lot more left to do.

### The services and systems survivors would improve

As a bridge to hearing women's ideas for becoming involved in making the changes they wanted, our survey asked women for the top three services or systems they would like to improve. Based on historical information from women using shelters, we listed 15 different systems and kinds of responses for women to consider as options and also provided a space for women to make additions to our list.

All of the options to consider were chosen by some women, and 22.4% of them suggested additional areas for work. The table below shows the services/ systems most often picked by survivors who filled out the survey.

Services and systems women would improve		
Options to consider	Percent	Count
Police	42.0%	68
Social assistance (OW/ODSP)	37.0%	59
Housing	34.0%	55
Family court	32.1%	51
Criminal court	25.9%	42
Training and education for women	23.5%	33
Women's shelter services	22.8%	37
Child welfare	21.0%	36
Legal Aid	21.0%	34
Community counselling services	21.1%	34
	answered	161
	skipped	1

Survivors who answered the surveys also noted the lack of available and affordable childcare, post-shelter services, second-stage housing options, support for pregnant women who are abused and pet care for women and children who have left an abusive situation. A few women also mentioned options for male survivors or that men should take a larger role in issues of woman abuse.

Additional areas for improvement also included medical systems, mental health facilities for both women and children, transportation systems (especially in Northern and rural communities), workplace standards (minimum wage, sexual harassment, employment standards), financial institutions, programs for children with special needs, faith community supports, self-defence and safety planning.

Women who attended women's meetings shared a lot of their own experiences with the services and systems they had used. Meetings gave women more space to discuss their personal experiences with each other and to talk about where they could see the need for improvement in their own communities. Their selections closely match those of survey participants.

Police services (including Aboriginal police services in the North) and both criminal and family courts (and other legal supports) topped the list—they were chosen by women in 9 of 11 communities where meetings were held.

Other priorities for women in group meetings:

- Social assistance (in 8 of 11 sites)
- Child welfare response (7 of 11)
- Women's shelters/transitional housing (7 of 11)
- Low-income housing (5 of 11)

Survivors at the meetings also identified training and education for women, decent wages and work conditions, changes to immigration (for example, better protections for women without status), improvement in medical system responses, better mental health and addiction services, expanded and increased childcare services, community counselling services and sexual assault services for both women and their children, as areas for improvement.

## Equity and access issues

Aboriginal women, immigrant women, women with disabilities and Francophone women identified the need for more service supports developed in response to their specific issues. They identified that they struggle to find appropriate services that respond to the challenges they face.

Aboriginal women in more than one community also said they had difficulty finding adequate services to meet their needs.

One immigrant woman living in a rural community, for example, found it frustrating to find and access services. She identified the struggle of immigrant women who face financial hardships but are not eligible for certain key financial supports that could help. Immigrant women also spoke of the lack of service accessible to them in their first language (e.g. Farsi).

Women in the Greater Toronto Area discussed experiences of discrimination based on race, gender, class and disability. They identified that systems of power do not take into account the perspectives of people from margin-

*I just got my toilet put in after five months without, and a church is paying for me to have clean water, whilst I've been dragged through the courts five times and charged because my lawyer wasn't representing me properly. I needed running water and a toilet. No one cared. Everyone I talked to was informed. I can't tell my 28-year-long story of abuse because it upsets me emotionally and then no one listens or cares.*

— Central Ontario

*Service providers should put more pressure on the legal system to stop making the victims more victims once they access the system.*

— Unknown location

*The first day I met my worker she told me that she was going to take my kids because I stayed with my husband and put my kids at risk. She told me the only way she wouldn't is if I went to a shelter. The shelter was great but I had other options that I would have preferred, like going to my mom's. I was so afraid of losing my kids that I did as they said without question. Child welfare should learn that their power is so much that they need to watch how they use it. Keeping women in fear of them makes it impossible for us to go to them if we need their help.*

— Central West Ontario



*The police had been called to my home repeatedly. By the end, they treated me like I wasn't worth their time. I understand their frustration because I keep staying with him, but they really need to get that it is not as easy as it seems to leave the guy that hurts you. I was so afraid that he was going to hurt my daughter that I couldn't leave. There is more to going than just walking out the door.*  
— Central Ontario

*My husband almost succeeded in killing me two years ago. He received (after months in custody were counted) less than a year in jail. I am still physically recovering from his assault. He broke every bone in my face and other bones. I have had multiple plastic surgeries. He is now a free man—I am still in the court system trying to recover proceeds of the house sold while he was in jail. I have not seen a penny of restitution that was ordered. He is allowed to keep cancelling or changing lawyers. He will always have a good paying job while I am on a disability and cannot work. What is left from the house when all is said and done will probably just pay my lawyer.*  
— Central Ontario

alized backgrounds and devalue people who do not have money.

Francophone women in Eastern Ontario identified lack of translation as one of the top priorities for them in terms of service that needs to improve.

Improvements were also prioritized specifically for women in Northern and rural communities, such as access to transportation and public services. In one meeting women discussed the way that lack of transportation is a barrier to reaching the few services that exist.

For example, women said that social housing in their Northern community is built far from the downtown core where the services that they need—shopping, medical services, childcare services, the legal clinic and other social supports (social assistance, employment offices)—are located. Most women leaving an abusive situation are forced on to welfare, cannot afford a car and don't have money for taxis, which only run on weekdays in any case, excluding Sundays.

It isn't hard to see that in this kind of situation, finding ways to rebuild, find work and raise children is punishing for women and their families. Accessing programs to address abuse itself is equally difficult as most community programs don't provide transportation or child care as supports.

Women also talked about the high level of poverty they face and their lack of basic needs, adequate housing and decent workplace conditions. Many of the basic services they struggle to access wouldn't be out of reach if they had the financial means to pay for them, as well as food, shelter and clothing. (Later in this report, women also point out how lack of financial supports affects their ability to contribute to community awareness and policy development work.)

Marginalized women urged more education and training on issues of discrimination. Although demographically, they represented a smaller number of women on the survey, they identified familiar ongoing issues of exclusion and discrimination, including racism, that remain largely unaddressed. These issues were raised in both survey responses and women's meetings.

### The kinds of improvements women want

In both meetings and surveys, women shared a lot of information, ideas and suggestions for positive steps to change. There were so many comments and recommendations from women, in fact, that it would be impossible to include all of them in this report.

Women's suggestions were both general, and very specific.

In our survey and in meetings, women gave information about their experiences and where they felt services and systems go wrong. They also shared their views on services that should be expanded or created to support women and children experiencing abuse.

Our survey asked women to classify the types of general changes they would like to see. They could choose as many of the suggested options as they wanted and/or add their own ideas. On the next page is a table of their selections.

Types of improvements women would make		
Options to consider	Percent	Count
Change the rules in the system/service	62.0%	98
Better understanding of violence by the system	62.0%	98
Improve the way systems/services treat women	58.9%	93
Support survivors to get involved in services	55.7%	88
Make services listen to women's ideas	46.8%	74
Provide more services	45.6%	72
Support survivors to share decision-making	22.8%	37
	answered	158
	skipped	5

Women who attended meetings talked a lot about the need for the same kind of improvements in their areas that survey respondents outlined. They also provided many suggestions for changes to services they had experienced as survivors.

### Some concerns for survivors—and their advice for change

Frustration with rules and practices in services and systems were equally matched with the need for better service provider education on the impacts of violence. The majority of women participating in the project identified the need for providers in different systems to treat women with dignity and respect, something survivors judged lacking in many cases.

Many women felt that services and professionals don't take them seriously, judge them, don't hold abusive partners accountable and either have barriers to access, or make access to the services difficult and discouraging. They also mentioned the delays in system responses in many cases and the overwhelming amount of documentation and paperwork they must do to apply or become eligible for services.

One survivor from Central Ontario described the frustration women feel this way: "Women need to be treated with more dignity and not have to beg and justify. When you decide to leave, this is taking a big step to control over your life. When you have such a hard time with services that are to help you, it rips it all away and it is devastating inside, and this can make you go back or give up. The end result is lives lost."

She added: "O may be a survivor, but I don't feel like it with all the dead-end numbers you're given, all the denials, numerous paperwork—and when you are done, there is more, half the time ending up nowhere. When you already have so much to deal with and so much healing within, the system should be more nurturing to the person."

In choosing services they would improve, and the kinds of changes they would like, survivors in both the surveys and meetings gave examples of concerns based on their personal experiences. The charts on the following three pages outline some of their frustrations with specific systems and gaps in support. They also had suggestions for what they would like to see happen in response to their concerns.

Make workers more available to those using the service. "I'm not at my desk, but your call is important to me," just doesn't do it. Work to ensure that systems and services are more accountable to their funders, e.g., the Ontario government. Currently, calling our local MPP is an exercise in futility. Create a position in the offices of systems and services that deals entirely with users of the service, an ombudsperson, if you will.

— Southwestern Ontario

Have more meetings where the survivors can get together and talk about their situations, perhaps even learn new things to help them deal or cope with a similar situation that they are going through. This is an issue that needs to be talked about more. It's not taboo, it's real and it happens everywhere.

— Central Ontario

Demand that each service have a built in system to evaluate the support that consumers get from their dealings with the agency. Where there are concerns and especially where agencies are incorrect in the information they provide or if they are menacing or bullying in any way, that needs to be addressed immediately (not years down the road after a dozen task forces have tried and failed to sort it out).

— Greater Toronto Area

Some concerns and suggestions based on survivor experiences		
<b>Police</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ dual charging; and threatening to charge</li> <li>❑ not laying charges; delays in charging</li> <li>❑ not understanding the level of intimidation of women by the abuser</li> <li>❑ judgemental, biased attitude or tone</li> <li>❑ delay in responding to calls, especially repeat call to same address</li> <li>❑ don't want to do all the paperwork</li> <li>❑ still don't believe sexually assaulted women</li> <li>❑ need to take family court orders seriously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ more education for police by survivors; hold 'feedback forums' to hear women's voices</li> <li>❑ more officers in rural and Northern areas</li> <li>❑ accountability of police to the people, not just the band Chief (Aboriginal police)</li> <li>❑ services in own languages (no interpretation by family members)</li> <li>❑ regular drive-bys of survivor's homes</li> <li>❑ call women's support services, not child welfare in 'domestics'</li> <li>❑ all officers need to respect women; not just 1 or 2 officers in a department</li> </ul>
<b>Social Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ puts pressure on women; increases stress</li> <li>❑ financial support is inadequate to women and children's needs</li> <li>❑ suspicious attitude makes women feel like criminals stealing from the workers</li> <li>❑ makes decisions without telling women why</li> <li>❑ won't give information about discretionary funds that women could access</li> <li>❑ too many punishments; little flexibility</li> <li>❑ inadequate start-up funding for women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ treat women with compassion and respect</li> <li>❑ increase rates and tie to cost of living; increase start-up funds</li> <li>❑ reduce paperwork and 'legalese' language</li> <li>❑ welfare workers should have to live for a week on welfare rates</li> <li>❑ give women the information they need to access available discretionary funding</li> <li>❑ increase dental, eye and drug coverage</li> <li>❑ increase special diet allowance, eg. for baby formula, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ long waiting lists for subsidized housing</li> <li>❑ social assistance doesn't cover rents</li> <li>❑ not enough housing; housing is substandard</li> <li>❑ landlords won't rent to women on welfare</li> <li>❑ abusers keep the house; women on the street</li> <li>❑ women with homes get less support than women who rent</li> <li>❑ women returning to abusers because they have nowhere else to live</li> <li>❑ policies contradict; e.g. when children in temporary care of CAS, women required to have bedrooms for them, but welfare will fund only one-bedroom/bachelor in such a case</li> <li>❑ have to repeat details of abuse to housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ turn vacant homes into affordable housing for people; build more subsidized housing</li> <li>❑ fix terrible condition of subsidized housing</li> <li>❑ create a bridge fund to help women keep their houses when they leave abuser</li> <li>❑ fund advocates for women to deal with the legal issues re: Housing</li> <li>❑ set up subsidized mortgage program</li> <li>❑ expand priority housing for survivors who are not currently 'living with' the abuser</li> <li>❑ more transitional housing for women</li> <li>❑ when the shelter provides a letter to housing outlining the abuse, women shouldn't have to rehash it all with housing workers</li> </ul>
<b>Family Court</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ courts don't understand serious impacts of abuse, or hold the abuser accountable</li> <li>❑ women are being sent to mediation</li> <li>❑ women are being forced to represent themselves because they can't afford a lawyer and family courts don't take self-represented women seriously; there is bias against self-representation but women have no choice</li> <li>❑ court cases drag on because of abuser delay tactics and nothing is done about it; women have to keep paying costs for this</li> <li>❑ restraining orders are difficult to get</li> <li>❑ joint custody is giving abusers more opportunities to control/abuse women and children</li> <li>❑ courts are threatening to take children away from survivors of abuse</li> <li>❑ family court is just another way for abusers to manipulate and control women</li> <li>❑ children's lawyers lack education about complexity of abuse and the tactics of abusers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ judges and children's lawyers should receive more education on the impacts and complexities of woman abuse</li> <li>❑ family law information centres should give workshops on filling out forms; give more help to women, not just provide handouts</li> <li>❑ women should not have to represent themselves in family court</li> <li>❑ all documents should have to be filed on time— enforce deadlines—and before proceedings begin and abusers should not be allowed to keep delaying the process</li> <li>❑ woman abuse survivors should have specialized lawyers who know the abuse issues</li> <li>❑ do not order visits with abusers when children are afraid of them</li> <li>❑ joint custody should not be awarded in cases of woman abuse</li> <li>❑ listen to children's voices at a younger age</li> <li>❑ address "common law" issues for women</li> </ul>

Some concerns and suggestions based on survivor experiences		
<b>Criminal Court</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ courts don't hold abusers accountable</li> <li>□ sexual assault survivors are still treated like they are the problem</li> <li>□ Domestic Violence courts are not running the way they are supposed to operate</li> <li>□ court delays and the length of time it takes to get through the process are unfair; unsafe</li> <li>□ court language is inaccessible</li> <li>□ courts are intimidating to survivors</li> <li>□ people with money get better treatment</li> <li>□ abusers lie in court with no consequences</li> <li>□ sitting waiting for court time costs women money for childcare, lost work time, and can be a safety issue for survivors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ stronger sentences, including for first time offenders; stop 'slap on the wrist' approach</li> <li>□ increase court watch programs in courts</li> <li>□ no bail for abusers</li> <li>□ enforce criminal harassment laws</li> <li>□ more accountability re: recognizance and surety issue</li> <li>□ should be more consequences for breaches</li> <li>□ provide video testimony to women/children</li> <li>□ separate rooms; women should not have to see abusers at court</li> <li>□ enforce perjury laws</li> <li>□ tighten processes to save court and women time; stop delay tactics and repeat remands</li> </ul>
<b>Training and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ need for more education on violence in all systems and services; still not enough understanding and genuine compassion by professionals in all of the systems</li> <li>□ teachers need more training on supporting children who are exposed to abuse</li> <li>□ services and systems don't understand differential impacts of abuse for immigrant women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women and low-income women</li> <li>□ still a lack of awareness within general public, including with women and girls about the impacts of woman abuse</li> <li>□ women on social assistance are discouraged from seeking higher education</li> <li>□ not enough supports for women to retrain or upgrade education and still provide a home for children, basic necessities and child care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ survivors/ women's shelters should be doing the training of all services and systems</li> <li>□ provide teachers with guidance on how to address behaviours of children</li> <li>□ specific education to better support immigrant and Aboriginal women, and women with disabilities; need to understand the impacts of poverty on women and also challenges of, and biases against, women with 'mental health' or addiction issues</li> <li>□ more general education for public—the Power and Control Wheel should be distributed like the Canada Food Guide</li> <li>□ provide more supports for women to upgrade education: Child care, transportation, funding for training and education</li> <li>□ allow women on social assistance to also access student loans for education</li> </ul>
<b>Women's Shelters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ insufficient numbers of staff to women</li> <li>□ need for more follow-up services after shelter</li> <li>□ not enough funding for shelters and need for more shelters for women leaving abusers</li> <li>□ inconsistency in services in different communities; from one shelter/ region to another</li> <li>□ not enough groups for women and children in the shelter or offered by the shelter</li> <li>□ shelter is full and then women have to wait</li> <li>□ confidentiality is a problem in small towns</li> <li>□ not enough public awareness of what shelters do for women and children and what women can expect when they go there</li> <li>□ shelters need to offer more support for child care and transportation for women</li> <li>□ rules in some of the shelters are too strong</li> <li>□ need for less discrimination in shelter mandates; no re-victimizing of women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ more funding should be directed to provide services in shelters—more counselling staff</li> <li>□ offer more services for children in shelters</li> <li>□ shelters should provide the same kinds of services in every location/ region</li> <li>□ more groups for women and children</li> <li>□ build more shelters for women so women don't have to wait for space</li> <li>□ look at rules and be more flexible</li> <li>□ women should get everything they need at the shelter rather than go all over the place for it; workers from other systems can come to the shelter to provide services to women</li> <li>□ young women should visit a women's shelter as part of their education on woman abuse</li> <li>□ shelter workers should be providing the education to other services and systems because they are the experts on abuse</li> </ul>
<b>Community Counselling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ need for better understanding of abuse and impacts on women and children</li> <li>□ don't provide transportation or childcare</li> <li>□ not enough groups for women/children</li> <li>□ not enough follow through with women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ more training for community workers</li> <li>□ programs should provide childcare and transportation to come to counselling groups</li> <li>□ provide more groups and follow up with women and children</li> </ul>



Some concerns and suggestions based on survivor experiences		
<b>Child Welfare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ need more education on woman abuse and impacts on women and children</li> <li>❑ need for more compassion; better attitude</li> <li>❑ don't remove children from abuse survivors</li> <li>❑ onus is on the woman to prove abuse and risk to her children; judgemental</li> <li>❑ reactive (too few workers to do proactive work with women/children)</li> <li>❑ women can't provide basics for children, so child welfare pays a foster home instead of providing that money to women themselves</li> <li>❑ makes women afraid to tell shelter workers the truth about abuse</li> <li>❑ don't advocate with women for housing, financial support</li> <li>❑ direct links between family supports/child protection makes mothers uncomfortable</li> <li>❑ children on waiting lists for years for services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ training on impacts of abuse and holding the abuser accountable, not mothers</li> <li>❑ increase staff that provide ongoing support</li> <li>❑ advocate for women within systems</li> <li>❑ specialized workers for woman abuse issues</li> <li>❑ give women the money spent on foster care so they can take care of their own children and keep their families together</li> <li>❑ be more respectful/ helpful to survivors and stop blaming mothers for abusers' actions</li> <li>❑ talk to children separately outside the home</li> <li>❑ should be responsible for finding counselling for the children; not forcing women to find it</li> <li>❑ better investigation of foster care homes</li> <li>❑ family supports and child counselling services should not be directly linked to child protection mandate</li> </ul>
<b>Legal Aid</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ in rural and Northern areas women have to travel too far to access lawyers</li> <li>❑ women don't have choice of lawyers; can't change lawyers that don't represent well</li> <li>❑ re-victimizing of women; needs more training on woman abuse; compassion</li> <li>❑ legal aid workers need information on how abusers use financial tactics against survivors; how they abuse the family law system</li> <li>❑ legal aid not available to many women who work; they end up representing themselves</li> <li>❑ too little flexibility around keeping assets</li> <li>❑ women with language barriers are not adequately represented</li> <li>❑ lawyers don't want to take "complex" cases, which many woman abuse cases are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ more financial support for legal aid issues; better access and more certificate lawyers</li> <li>❑ expand the amount of assets women can keep under Legal Aid policy</li> <li>❑ allow survivors to change lawyers if needed</li> <li>❑ better training for Legal Aid panel lawyers</li> <li>❑ more Legal Aid support for working and middle class women who are living pay cheque to pay cheque and can't afford lawyers</li> <li>❑ women who have shelter support should be automatically qualified for ongoing legal aid support as survivors</li> <li>❑ decrease the 'hoop jumping' needed to get Legal Aid and provide more help at Legal Aid offices for survivors with legal issues</li> </ul>
<b>Medical Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ there are not enough family doctors</li> <li>❑ family doctors and nurses are not well enough educated about woman abuse</li> <li>❑ need to see the links between addictions, self-harm, postpartum depression, bulimia, etc. and woman abuse</li> <li>❑ doctors need to stop relying on medicating survivors, particularly with anti-depressants</li> <li>❑ women don't get information about specific services for abuse early enough when they approach mental health services</li> <li>❑ some specialists are not affordable; may have to pay fees for counselling</li> <li>❑ women can't afford costs of prescriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ more doctors and nurses need to be better trained to recognize woman abuse and listen to what survivors are saying</li> <li>❑ more referrals needed for counselling services and less medicating of survivors</li> <li>❑ provide information on women and children's community services earlier, when women approach mental health system, thinking that they're 'going crazy'</li> <li>❑ doctors should become better informed on where women can access lower cost drugs</li> <li>❑ more psychiatrists and therapists who have knowledge about woman abuse issues</li> <li>❑ better drug plans; lower drug costs</li> </ul>
<b>Immigration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ too much paperwork and costs to renew</li> <li>❑ education received before should count here</li> <li>❑ survivors without status are very vulnerable and need to be able to access supports</li> <li>❑ men not given information on laws about abuse here in Canada</li> <li>❑ women not informed on how to access services; very difficult to find what they need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ make it easier to come to this country</li> <li>❑ recognize education so that women can work and raise their children</li> <li>❑ more information for immigrant women on where to find the services they need</li> <li>❑ immigrants who live in Canada for a long time as 'upstanding citizens' should be granted residency and citizenship</li> </ul>



## Including survivor voices for positive change

The objective of the Survivor Voices project was to find out how survivors themselves would like to share their ideas for improving services.

The previous section outlines many of the comments women have made about particular systems as they experienced them.

Suggestions for changes vary. One woman suggested bringing back the death penalty to deter abusive men. Another favours education for men about abuse. One woman finds the feminist perspective sometimes too radical and some women's groups "anti-men". Other women just as passionately support more funding and leadership by women's shelters and women's support groups.

Survivor perspectives may not always mesh with each other, just as those among advocates, other professionals and policymakers also differ.

One thing is certain, however. There is no shortage of ideas or interest among survivors for making services and systems the best they can be for women and their children. Survivors are eager to share their ideas. They want to help, for themselves and for women who come after them.

## How women see themselves being involved

Using our knowledge of how survivors have contributed to improving services in the past, we asked women to consider some ways to get involved in making changes. Women could choose as many of the options that interested them. They were also invited to make their own additions to our list. Below is a summary of their responses.

Ways for women to get involved		
Options to consider	Percent	Count
Give suggestions on a services evaluation form	56.9%	87
Join a survivor group to take action together	56.2%	86
Join a speakers group to educate in community	51.6%	79
Join a committee or Board of a shelter/service	43.1%	66
Public events, meeting politicians, protest, etc.	43.1%	66
Meet with officials in the systems/services	41.8%	64
Join an advisory committee in the community	41.2%	63
	answered	153
	skipped	10

Some of the ideas that women added to the survey options included:

- signing petitions on changes to legal rules and human rights laws
- fundraising and volunteering with women's services
- starting their own women's group in the community
- helping a friend or stranger who is experiencing violence
- talking to women leaving abusive situations to show them that a woman can start a new life after leaving; mentoring
- writing for newsletters, speaking to media

I am involved with public speaking in the community as a leader and a voice for women who have been involved with abuse, past and present. I also want society and the government to know that abuse is a deep core issue. It's the shelters and the staff who carry the women through the pains and trauma of life. Without the shelters, women are internally scarred for life with no vision of moving forward to freedom.

— Eastern Ontario

It is so hard to keep my kids from having to put up with ridicule at school because of money issues. I mean the school itself expects three pairs of shoes, buying of instruments, not to mention all the class trips, hotdog days, pizza days and all the other stuff. My kids deal with constant bullying because I can't give them anything even close to what the other kids have. It breaks my heart every day.

— Central Ontario

Ontario Works rates are criminally low. Family Court does not recognize that the man who beats the child's mother is injuring the child and insists on giving the man rights to the child.

— Southwestern Ontario

*I am a single mother of four. Sometimes attending (programs) is difficult as childcare may not be available.*

— Central Ontario

*Most mainstream groups are concerned with the same old issues and ignore the more recent issues that affect women and children, especially the concerns of homeless populations who reside in women's shelters and transitional homes. These populations have many important issues to discuss but think they are not welcome in spaces where mainstream women contribute to work that changes systems or services. Mainstream women's organizations and advocacy groups must outreach to this population and encourage vulnerable women to power-share and participate in equal measure.*

— Unknown location

*Give me a job to do to organize.*

— Eastern Ontario

*I would offer some specialists that work independently from the systems to work directly with survivors. They would help women and children through the system and work with the systems.*

— Unknown location

- writing letters to advocate for themselves with systems
- creating a brochure about how services can be helpful to women
- creating a website for survivors, run by survivors; providing online access for women who want to participate anonymously

In a number of the meetings, most of the discussion revolved around bad experiences that women had with the systems and services they used, and how they felt about the response to their needs, but women also expressed interest in helping to make improvements to those responses.

They were most interested in joining a local group of survivors to plan community events and awareness raising activities, as well as looking at other ways to enter/ shape decision-making processes. In a meeting in the North, women said they would like to attend a big protest for women's rights.

Survivors were also interested in joining a committee or Board of a shelter or becoming members of an advisory committee within their communities.

Some women were uncertain about how they could comfortably or safely become involved, or how to add to our list of options.

### Survivors finding ways to share their ideas

Some survivors who participated in the project were already working on making positive change in their community.

Of our survey group, 147 women responded to a question about their current activities. Of these women, thirty percent (43) felt they were doing something positive to improve conditions for survivors. Seventy-one percent said they weren't currently involved. Most reports from the women's meetings didn't include a lot of this information but some survivors mentioned that they were already involved—one meeting was facilitated by a survivor who was now working with a shelter.

Here is a summary of some popular actions survivors take to share their ideas and advice:

- organizing with women in a local group to address violence
- education/speaking in the community (e.g. on abuse, sexual harassment)
- attending a weekly support group for women
- participating in focus groups and surveys like this one
- serving on the Board of a women's shelter or second stage program
- working towards academic qualifications to work in the field
- offering wisdom to other women experiencing abuse
- participating in public events organized by the shelter or other women's groups, such as Take Back the Night, International Women's Day, 'clothes line' projects or December 6th vigils
- sitting on a committee of a mental health association
- preparing newsletter articles and other written materials for women
- doing outreach to family/ friends, faith community members, media

One survivor in South Central Ontario said that she prepares information for peer supporters on the needs of women, makes recommendations for improving bonds between women and peer supporters, and has written an information booklet for survivors who are thinking of leaving an abuser. She also works as a peer support person for women experiencing violence.

Another woman from Eastern Ontario sits on a financial accessibility committee of the Canadian Mental Health Association, participated in the launch of a report card on homelessness in her area and did media interviews, stays involved with the women's agency that she used and acts as a link with her church outreach committee to share the needs of local survivors that the church might be able to provide.

A number of survivors mentioned that they like to participate in events organized by women's groups about women's equality and violence against women, especially events around December 6, Take Back the Night and International Women's Day. One woman from a small Northern Ontario town participates in all of these events despite some anxiety. She wrote:

"Me and my friends go to all the things put on by (the shelter). It is scary sometimes though because I never know who will see me and tell my ex. The (shelter) workers make sure I am safe while I am there, but not every woman thinks what I am doing is good."

### What keeps women from participating?

Although some women find ways to raise their voice, despite their some anxiety, others would like to participate but face a number of obstacles.

Women answering our survey considered a list of possible obstacles they might face and were also invited to add their own comments about barriers that they personally face. Below are their choices.

What keeps women from participating?		
Options to consider	Percent	Count
I don't know where to start	53.6%	60
If women in my community are doing this, I don't know where or how to contact them	45.5%	51
There is no survivors group working to improve services in my community	35.7%	40
I need transportation support to participate	35.7%	40
I need childcare support to participate	33.9%	38
As far as I know, survivors are not invited to community activities to improve services	26.8%	30
There are no other activities in my community that work to improve systems/services	14.3%	16
Equity barriers: Lack of sign language, language translation, inaccessible to women with disabilities; poverty	7.2%	8
I know of groups working to improve systems but I don't feel welcome there	4.5%	5
	answered	112
	skipped	51

*Make me aware via email of any programs/fundraising and since I have my own company I could offer my services on request as a voluntary basis.*  
— Central Ontario

*Do what service departments at car dealerships do—give me a pass code to a website where I can immediately evaluate their service (anonymously) after I have received it, and also ask me if I would like to receive an annual summary report via email of those surveys.*

— Unknown location

*Single, sole-support female parents are too busy parenting and foraging for their next meal to have the luxury of giving free advice. We need to be paid to participate in surveys, make suggestions, go to meetings with officials or be part of advisory committees or to take action politically. The whole idea of keeping women in poverty is about keeping us too busy surviving to speak out. Make it affordable for us to take action (as we are very passionate about our cause).*

— Southwestern Ontario

*I know I can help a great deal to help women and children. I just need a little confidence in myself.*

— Central Ontario

*Having been through the experience, the system and transition from abuse, I could relate and try to be supportive to other women, helping them to feel at ease to take part in achieving the next steps to improving their lives and improving the system.*

— Central Ontario

*Just because I don't have money or a lot of education, Doesn't mean I can't give you good information. Ask me. Make me feel like you want to hear what I have to say. Don't let me feel like if I do tell you the truth, I will be in trouble for it, with indirect threats of losing my kids or getting kicked out of my house or off OW. Not only do woman like me need to speak up to make change—you need to hear us and speak it to.*

— Unknown location

Both women who answered the survey and women who discussed barriers in their meetings commonly identified barriers that could be overcome with some commitment from a service or community system.

The most common concrete barriers to participation were:

- practical supports for women: childcare, transportation, translation and interpretation, accessibility and accommodations, food and safe meeting space, access to tools and technology, and payment for time.
- lack of information about opportunities to get involved and the failure of services and systems to invite women to participate

By far, the most often mentioned barriers to participation were childcare and transportation or the money to pay for them.

These are challenges that communities can, and have, overcome in the past in order to move a project forward within their service or system. It would be reasonable for survivors to expect, then, that these supports can be provided in appreciation and support of their involvement.

To remove other barriers, however, communities will need to take ongoing responsibility for addressing the more substantial roadblocks to survivor participation.

Women in the project who commented on barriers identified a number of issues that make them hesitant to participate in spite of their passion to change service response in positive ways.

Time is a luxury for women rebuilding their lives after abuse. Some women commented that time spent dealing with services and systems themselves left little energy for anything else. After initial challenges are met, women continue to struggle in the face of poverty and inadequate housing, and lack of childcare or opportunities to upgrade work skills, to name a few.

Over half of the women from the survey said that they didn't know where to start to make the changes they wanted. Their assessment, echoed by women in the community meetings, is that they need better information on how to provide their ideas and that they want support to gain the confidence and skills to effectively advocate for improvements.

Some women said that they needed more time to heal from the abuse and to increase their own self-esteem. Others objected to the policies of some services that women heal and be able to distance themselves from their personal experience of abuse before becoming involved in "giving back" to other women.

Some women were pursuing academic work that limited the time they can spend, or were unable to participate in some activities because they take place during work hours.

Women mentioned geographic barriers, such as getting to activities in a rural area or finding safe ways to be involved in the North or in small towns where they might be more visible.

One woman felt that 'traditional' women could not find a comfortable place to fit in, while others do not believe that systems and services want to hear what they have to say, anyway.



One survivor found calls to action too harsh, saying: “Stop making all of the literature sound so angry. I think it turns some people away as it portrays a fight—a battle that not everyone wants to participate in. Some want to help but don't necessarily feel it has to be such a strong fight. I know it is, and can be, and there needs to be those individuals that do that, but not everyone has to. There are other ways to help.”

Finally, women in one Northern community meeting said that many services fail not only to remove obstacles to women's participation, but often to even recognize that they exist. Such denial, they said, makes it hard not only to join community activities, but to access the programs and follow through with the expectations of many of the services they use. Survivors felt that it was shameful to have to explain why they can't afford to participate, or that they may have safety concerns.

### Survivor advice on the best ways to include women

We asked women to give their advice on the best ways to include them in activities for improving service and system response. We also asked them what services and systems would need to do to make them feel welcome in the process what they would do, if they had the power, to make it easier for women to get involved.

Survivors were generous with their guidance and suggestions for communities, but worried about ensuring that women who want to be part of improving services/systems will be treated with respect and heard.

They made practical suggestions for ways to do outreach to them and to make space for their voices. Here are some of their ideas:

- Provide checklists at every process (hospital, police, etc.) for easy collection of information and evidence for court.
- Meet with women where they are living e.g. at the shelter.
- Ensure that women know that their feedback and participation will not result in retaliation—e.g. discharge from a shelter bed or loss of service.
- Make forums available for women to let providers know how they are performing—both what they are doing well and what improvements are needed. Bring together representatives of different services and systems to hear from survivors about the challenges they are facing. Cross-system participation so that all services hear from the women in one place.
- Bring MPPs and MPs together with survivors to hear about their struggles and the ideas they have for improving conditions for women.
- Post opportunities for participation in the way that civic activities are advertised, e.g. for rezoning changes, CRTC submissions, etc. Don't limit recruitment for women participants to service agencies and their clients.
- Provide seminars and workshops for survivors to learn skills for participating in service development and organizational change.
- Create a call list to let survivors know about opportunities to get involved in activities or events. Make a personal contact.
- Set up peer support groups with a buddy system to support other women going to court, appointments or community meetings.
- Support survivors to start their own women's groups.
- Put on a conference for survivors.
- Put information in strategic places where women go, e.g. shopping malls,

*I think that I as an abuse survivor would like to counsel women on how to overcome the abuse and help them get out of it. Sometimes experience in the situation speaks volumes to the other women, when they know that you know exactly how they feel. But I am not sure how to start.*

— Unknown location

*You can ask all the questions and interview all the victims, but action is what people need.*

— Central Ontario

*People can say lots of things to you, but how can you trust them or believe them? Actions speak louder than words! People need to stop saying things and start doing things.*

— Southwestern Ontario

*I truly feel every situation is different. Trust is the beginning. From there, it will depend on services, support, finances and the desire to change your line of thinking.*

— Unknown location



*I would like to start my own women's group where we meet on a regular basis to share stories and ideas about our abuse and put it into positive actions. Also start a group where we think of ways to raise money for a variety of abused women services.*

— East Central Ontario

*I would like to see more shelters for abused women and children. I would like to get across to women. It is OK to leave their abuser. Let them know there is a lot of help. And that the outside is really a safe place.*

— Central Ontario

*They need to be nice to women who go through abuse.*

— Unknown location

*I just found out today that it was even possible for survivors to help. I've thought a lot about trying to help other women, but thought you had to have the education.*

— Unknown location

grocery stores, day care centres, laundromats, etc.

- Bring women in to speak to current survivors as an example of how women can end the abuse in their lives and start over.
- Provide for involvement of survivors online especially for women who have difficulty sharing information with strangers.
- Hold open discussion groups where survivors can 'test the waters' to see if their experiences will be welcome and valued.
- Dedicate space on every committee and Board for survivors.
- Get prominent women and men together to speak about abuse so that the stigma is reduced for survivors to identify themselves.
- Advertise opportunities for participation in newspapers, cable TV and local radio stations.
- Hold 'seminars' or brown bag lunch events where survivors share with other women a coping strategy, skill or activity that may assist other women with their challenges.
- Have an influential member of every service make contact with shelters or with survivors directly to get realistic feedback on where concerns lie.
- Create a fully independent ombudservice with authority to investigate complaints and provide enforcement of legislation at all levels, with substantive whistleblower protection. Track discrimination and retaliation.
- Provide jobs for survivors within the services.
- Make particular efforts to do outreach in rural and Northern communities and recognize the issue of distance and need for transportation or alternate ways for women to participate in these communities.
- Create a foundation to financially support survivors.
- Provide participation for women in their first language.
- Include male survivors of violence and both men and women.

It was clear from discussions with women and from the numerous comments made on their surveys that survivors often feel that their opinions don't matter, their ideas have little value to systems or services and that they often feel disrespected and disbelieved.

Over and over, they gave this advice to services and systems: Hearing from survivors in the best way to make positive change.

#### **10 'best practices' for services that want to hear from survivors**

1. Treat women as equals with respect and understanding.
2. Listen! Listen! Listen! Pay attention.
3. Take seriously what survivors say; believe in survivors' knowledge.
4. Don't just listen—Act! Implement the changes survivors suggest.
5. Do what you say you will do. Be trustworthy.
6. Give women the information they need to participate.
7. Make the process transparent; visible.
8. Involve women in decision-making.
9. Be flexible and inclusive of different women's contributions.
10. Provide all of the practical supports (listed previously) that make it possible for women to participate.

## What makes women feel welcome

Overcoming the impacts of the negative experiences survivors have had, and setting the stage for them to participate in development and decision-making, first requires the creation of a welcoming space. We asked survivors in our surveys and meetings to tell us what systems would have to do or say to make them feel welcome.

### Just ask me!

According to the women participating in Survivor Voices, the best way to welcome women is just to ask them to join the cause. That action alone would be a positive step for women who feel that the knowledge they gain from experience doesn't count.

One survivor said: "If a system or service reached out and asked me to get involved, I would be more than glad to be of service and would welcome the opportunity. A service or system would not need to make a specific statement to make me feel welcome. I would be honoured to help in any way possible." A woman from Central Ontario said she would need "nothing more than kind, gentle, understanding words of encouragement and support." Another wrote: "They would just have to ask me, I would do whatever I could to help other women not to have to experience (abuse) anymore."

The invitation to be part of the process must be real and honest, however.

### Getting respect

One thread that runs through concerns about their experiences in the systems and their suggestions for improvement also weaves into the picture of a welcoming space for survivor participation.

It goes beyond the empowerment that comes with a simple invitation. Women want to "belong" in the spaces they share with services and systems—to be a critical part of the fabric of change.

A welcoming space offers respect without judgement.

A survivor from Eastern Ontario wrote: "They would just have to let me have a voice and value my opinion. (But) being someone with a mental illness—I would also need them to not judge me."

Many survivors referred back to the practical obstacles they listed in moving on with their lives and getting involved with community activities. Removing those barriers, women said, is a key way for services to show that they recognize the barriers and that they truly want survivor feedback.

A number of women said they would like to know that other survivors would also be participating—one survivor said that she would want to know that only women would be participating.

Several women noted that being able to contribute in their language of preference would be a welcome sign for them. An Aboriginal woman said she would feel welcome if the service would have "someone like me, ask me, an Indian woman." Another woman would need to know that the service was working to end same-sex abuse.

A number of women also noted that financially recognizing the value of

*Open the line of communications, where survivors are seen as intelligent, trustworthy, educated resources and are utilized with respect.*

— West Central Ontario

*Childcare is a huge barrier for me. I have two young children. My toddler is in daycare for speech development, but I also have a one-year-old at home with me full time. I have not been able to receive counselling because they do not provide any childcare services at community counselling. There are groups for women at (a local Aboriginal program) that I wish to attend, but again, unfortunately, there is no childcare. Also, the daycares in this city do not offer part-time infant positions.*

— Northern Ontario

*There are times I don't eat so I can feed my kids. With rent, school needs, clothing, hydro and phone, I can't make it.*

— Central West Ontario

*I was told that I needed to find an apartment that was \$350.00 a month all included. All I could find for that kind of money was a room. It was dirty and shared a bathroom with three other people. I feel so degraded. I never thought I'd have to live like this.*

— Central Ontario

*Just ask, I would try to do anything I could, but right now I don't know of any outlets.*

— Central Ontario

*Encourage women to participate in their community, and give back to other abused women, as a way to heal. Most people, in my experience, discourage women from participating, saying: "You need to heal yourself first." In my opinion, it is essential, if a woman has a need to do so, for a woman to be involved in services for abused women in order for her to recover and feel like she is contributing. We, as survivors of abuse, were often made to feel unimportant, or inadequate, and we need to be in a position where we feel valued and respected, and where our involvement is crucial.*

— Eastern Ontario

*Listen to those who have experienced abuse. They are in the best position to tell systems/services what problems they need to address. Personal stories are powerful.*

— Central Ontario

women's experiences is another important way to tell women that their opinions have value, while also helping women with the ongoing financial struggles that so many survivors have.

How services and systems treat women as "clients" also clearly factors into what women need to feel welcome—where women feel devalued on the service delivery side, they need greater evidence of commitment to listening if they are to share their perspectives and insights.

Some survivors expressed reluctance to share those thoughts for fear of being dismissed, mocked or punished in some way, either with withdrawal of needed services or other forms of re-victimization. Clearly, having had this type of experience with systems they were not eager to set themselves up for more denial and rejection when they talk to services about their experiences or give suggestions for changes to the community.

Said one woman from an Eastern Ontario rural community: "Invite me, and then treat me like a contributing member of society when I get there. I am continually surprised at the attitudes of people in my area, despite the fact that before I was a known victim of violence, I was considered highly intelligent. Now I am a second class citizen and must have no education (despite my graduate degree).

Another wrote: "Encourage me to participate as PART of my healing, rather than telling me to heal on my own first. Healing from abuse can take a lifetime, and I for one know I don't want to wait that long."

A survivor from West Central Ontario stated: "I would need to know what I said wouldn't affect me in a bad way. I would need to know that speaking out would make a difference, and that I wasn't just wasting my time and effort to try and change something that won't change."

A woman from the Greater Toronto Area wrote: "I would need to feel that my experiences are important and will make a difference in how their services will operate. I would like to feel that although I have no post secondary education I can still make an impact. I would like to know that although I survived my abuse by abusing drugs and alcohol they will be able to identify me with being an abuse survivor more than a recovering addict. I would like to know where I can go and what I can do with my limited education and resources."

## Getting results

Many survivors who commented on welcoming ways want the assurance that their energy and time will be well-spent. They want to know that their contributions are genuinely valued. They expect a commitment from services and systems that their efforts will be followed with action to improve response to survivors and their children.

They want to see positive movement for women.

Said one woman: "Feeling welcome is a part of reaching out with a smile and with genuine, compatible interests. Most people walk in with an open mind, it's what happens after that which makes the difference."

Women in a meeting in one Central Ontario community agreed: "We don't want someone to come and hear us, and make promises that disappear as soon as they walk out the door."

Defining “results” depends on each woman’s personal perspective. One survivor said: “I would just need to know I would be making a difference.”

Another needs to know that “they want to change and will take specific steps within a specific time frame.” A participant from Eastern Ontario outlined that her participation should lead to something clearly thought out.

She stated: “An agency or service would need to have credibility in the community to make me feel my participation would be worth the effort of time and participation. The plan would have to be inclusive of a variety of cultures and backgrounds, including the experience of male survivors. The plan would have to be prepared with concrete goals and objectives and be presented to the community and to related agencies, services, ministries in a clear, focussed and publicly-accessible manner.”

### Words of welcome

A number of women told us what they would like to hear someone say when they join in with a process to improve services or system response. Here are some of their suggestions.

“You are safe.”

“We want to hear your voice.”

“We will not judge you.”

“Everyone is welcome. We need your input. Many voices make us stronger.”

“You are important.”

“This will not hurt your use of services.”

“We need your input and support to make a difference.”

“Without you and other women like you, the changes cannot be made to the services that so desperately need to be changed to be more helpful to others like you.”

“We see that your uniqueness can be of so much help to us and to your sisters everywhere.”

### Women appreciate having a voice

The Survivor Voices project provided an evaluation form for organizers to distribute to women who attended community meetings. Although not every meeting group completed these forms, we received information from 44 participants.

They overwhelmingly felt that the meeting they attended was “good” or “great”. The most common comment about how to improve meetings was that women would have liked more time for discussion and the chance to discuss a greater number of issues. Meetings were timed to last three hours, so it is clear that women have a lot more to share with communities about their experiences, and the measures they would like communities to take.

Survivors were happy to share their ideas and appreciated hearing those of the other women participating. Many recommended additional meetings to go into the issues in more depth. In some communities, women are continuing to plan meetings together so that they can stay connected and think about where they want to go from here.

One survivor suggested women should: “Make more noise! Raise our voices and create more forums, open to the community to hear as well. Discuss how we can bring in other support centres for workshops to help get our info out there. Discuss how to influence ‘higher ups’ in the community.”

*I believe that the government still sees us women as just a nuisance that they need to placate. It is hard to get your community, police, etc. to see our issues as legitimate when we can't even get the government to.*

—Central Ontario

*I would not penalize women who go to school (college, trade or university) by removing them from Ontario Works and causing them to request exorbitant student loans. I would also significantly lower the interest rates for Canada Student loans as schooling ought not be a "for profit" venture. It would also make it easier for graduates to repay loans and they would become contributing consumers sooner, thereby contributing to the "for profit" sector.*

—Southwestern Ontario

*Provide forums for me to participate in; such as this online questionnaire. I don't mind giving of my time if I believe it will make a difference in the long run. Women who have had to navigate the system know first hand the system is flawed. It isn't cut and dry. There is a lot of reading between the lines, and if you don't know what you are doing, you can make a mistake that is costly.*

—Unknown location



*There should be money available to abused woman so they could make a difference.*  
— Central Ontario

*The government needs to see that we need more financial support. We are not trying to sit on the system and get a handout. We are trying to start over. If they knew how hard it was to get help and how badly you are treated when you ask for it or receive it, they would get that this is not fun for us.*  
— Central Ontario

*Improve access to services and increase number of shelters or spaces for local women who flee violence and abuse with pet(s) in tow...This is a huge problem that every service provider is ignoring. Why separate a woman from her beloved pet? This situation happens every day. Do something about this. Much like a child, a woman's pet is her family too, especially more so if the pet is a necessary help for a disabled woman or child.*  
— Location unknown

## Section 3: What next?

Of course, not all survivors of violence are interested or able to participate in the multi-faceted work to build effective responses to woman abuse. Many struggle to get by day to day or need time before they want to think about their next steps. Many have different goals and interests.

As one survivor who participated in this project quite legitimately said: “I choose not to get involved and that is an acceptable option. Not all survivors have to get involved. Moving on in life is, in itself, a way of taking action.” Another felt that the women’s shelter that she used represented her views very well and could take her voice forward to policymakers and the local systems and services.

Most of the women who participated in the Survivor Voices project, however, demonstrated that they are eager to get involved in sharing their expertise, want to learn more about ways to participate and need only to be asked and genuinely supported to enter the door.

Ninety-six women across the province, or 81.4% of the women who answered the survey, said they would be interested in being involved in any further Survivor Voices activities that might take place.

Like the survivors and advocates who 30 years ago organized fledgling women’s services and supports, women in Ontario today are speaking out about their ideas and their passion to shape improvements and innovations in response to woman abuse.

The survivors we spoke to have given services and systems a lot to consider. And some very concrete ways to support women who want to belong to the movement to end woman abuse. Many more women from divergent communities across the province are also poised to take their rightful place at the table. They are a most valuable resource we must not dismiss.

### How services and systems can help

Today fortunately, services and systems in Ontario are more well-placed to include survivors in the many projects and activities that are currently taking place across the province than they were 30 years ago.

We urge them to take survivors up on their eagerness to participate, and to share with them the work to make positive change for women and their children in an ongoing and permanent way.

We call on services and systems in local communities to:

1. Reach out to women in all the ways they have listed—both personally and publicly—and invite them into local processes.
2. Provide budgetary and practical support for participation of survivors in service evaluation, development and coordination processes.
3. Support survivors who want to gather independently and provide supportive assistance and in-kind services such as room space, office supplies, materials and technological support.
4. Provide organizational and facilitation support to survivors who ask for this type of assistance to start their own groups and activities.



## How government can help

The Ontario government, of course, also has an important role to play in supporting survivors of woman abuse to assume a leadership role in the work to end violence against women.

There are several key ways that the Province of Ontario can respond to women like the survivors who participated in this project:

1. Look at the comments and concerns of survivors outlined in this report and consider the thousands of women and children across Ontario who share those experiences and opinions about social program and public system gaps, and needed enhancements to services.
2. Develop ways to reach out to survivors as policymakers and legislators, and find ways to welcome them into consultation and government policy development processes.
3. Fund the activities of survivors, and services that want to support ongoing survivor involvement in their evaluation and development work.
4. Fund survivors who want or organize their own independent projects to raise awareness of current issues and/or to make recommendations to policy forums and other community and public processes.
5. Move forward on one of the Step it Up Campaign measures outlined in the campaign Platform for Parties, released prior to the 2007 provincial election campaign. Under the Platform section on supporting the advocacy and expertise of survivors and women's advocates, the Platform urges the Province to provide "\$1.5 million annually to support engagement and participation of survivors of violence with local, regional and provincial women's services and advocacy groups."

## Final word

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses will be following up within our own organization with regard to the comments and suggestions put forward by the project participants.

We will be providing this report back to the women who met in the Survivor Voices community meetings and to the 95 women from our survey collection who shared their contact information with us in order to receive a copy of the report. We hope that they can use it as a catalyst for creating the space they need to make the improvements they recommend.

This information will also be posted for download on our website at: [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca), produced on a CD and distributed throughout the province among our members and other contacts.

*Listen to the seriousness of our voices and experiences; get answers from those who have lived through violence.*  
— Eastern Ontario

*Women want to help make changes, but finding the ways to do that are difficult. Outreach services that work with shelters are probably the best source of volunteers. As a survivor of violence, I want to make a difference and help but don't know how.*  
— Eastern Ontario

*Open doors for women (survivors) to share their stories and have safe space where they can unite. Listen and believe the survivors' stories. Make them trust the system by treating them with respect. Survivors will get hope when they feel they have been heard.*  
— Unknown location

*You know women have come a long way, gaining power and strength. The male ego can't handle the loss of control and downplays the work and the causes of women and what we have done. If you look at it like a war, it seems that men are losing ground (control) so they are fighting even harder. The harder they fight with women, the more abuse happens to women.*  
— Central Ontario

## Survivor Voices Project Survey Questions



### **We Want to Hear Your Voice!**

#### **Introduction (you can skip this if you want)**

A woman often meets roadblocks when she tries to get away from an abuser. When she first looks for help, she may have trouble finding services or getting systems like police, courts, child protection, social assistance and even women's services to help her get the things she needs.

Later, she may face other barriers: lack of childcare, housing, jobs, training or money for legal services, for example, that keep her from starting a new life.

She may also face discrimination because of race, disability, income, age, sexuality, language and culture, because she is a mother, or because she lives in a rural or Northern area. Women who face these roadblocks often feel frustrated or angry.

They want to make changes for other women in the future. They often have good ideas about what would work better. But unlike years ago, when survivors were helping to start women's shelters and rape crisis centres, it's now harder for women to find a place where they can take action to improve community services and systems.

The Survivor Voices project wants to start changing that situation.

As a first step, we want to collect and share some ideas from survivors like you. We want to do that by creating a "guide" for communities in Ontario—from the point of view of survivors—that offers advice and ideas on:

a) how services can include and welcome women into work to improve systems b) what supports for survivors that women would suggest to make that happen

The project is the work of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH), the women's shelter network, with the guidance of an Advisory Committee of woman abuse survivors.

By filling in this survey you will be contributing your ideas and advice. Anything you share will be confidential, except for the project coordinators and the Advisory Committee members. You do not have to give your name, or any information about yourself to participate, but if you want to receive a final copy of the guide, we will be happy to send it to any address you provide.

**We very much appreciate your time and ideas!**

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)

## **Questions**

**1. If you wanted to improve any of the services or systems that you used when you experienced abuse, which three would be at the top of your list?**

- ☐ Police
- ☐ Criminal court (Crown Attorneys, judges and victim assistance)
- ☐ Family court (Family lawyers, mediation, family court judges)
- ☐ Legal Aid (financial support for legal issues)
- ☐ Child welfare (Children's Aid, Child and Family Services, etc.)
- ☐ Social assistance/ welfare (Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support)
- ☐ Community counselling services
- ☐ Women's shelter services
- ☐ Services for women who are new to Canada
- ☐ Housing (low-income housing)
- ☐ Childcare/daycare services
- ☐ Training and education for women
- ☐ Services for Aboriginal women
- ☐ Language interpretation services (including sign language)
- ☐ French language services

If you would choose any other systems or services that aren't on this list, please write them in here...

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**2. What kind of improvements/changes would you like to make in the systems or services you picked? You can choose more than one answer and/or add your own.**

- ☐ Improve the way the system or service treats survivors of violence and their children
- ☐ Change the rules in the system or service to better support women and their children
- ☐ Make the service/system better understand violence against women
- ☐ Make them listen to survivors' ideas and concerns
- ☐ Find ways to include survivors in decisions about how the services or systems will run



- ☐ Give survivors the support they need to get involved (eg. money to participate, information about how to get involved, encouragement to participate, etc.)
- ☐ Provide more of these services

If you want to add other ways that you would like to improve systems and services, please write them here...

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**3. What would be good ways for you to get involved in making the changes you want? You can choose more than one answer on the list or add one of your own.**

- ☐ Go to meetings with officials in the systems/ services
- ☐ Give suggestions for changes through a form or evaluation of the services
- ☐ Be part of a speakers group that provides education to groups and services in the community
- ☐ Join a group of survivors to talk about taking our own action together as we see the need for changes in our community
- ☐ Be part of advisory committees or other groups in the community that include services and systems to offer ideas and criticism
- ☐ Join a committee or Board of a women's shelter or other community service for women
- ☐ Plan political actions like community events, meetings with politicians, public protests and other public activities that raise
- ☐ issues of violence against women

If you have a different idea that isn't on the list, please add your own here...

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**4. Are you involved now in any activities to help improve systems and services for women survivors in your community?**

- ☐ Yes ☐ No



**5. If you answered "Yes" to question 4, what are the activities that you are working on?**

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**6. If you answered "No" to question 4, what holds you back from getting involved in making the changes you want? You can choose more than one answer and/or add your own.**

- ☐ There is no survivors' group that I know of working to improve systems or services in my community
- ☐ There are no other activities in my community that work on improving systems
- ☐ As far as I know, survivors are not invited to activities in my community that work to change systems or services
- ☐ I know of groups working to improve systems/services in my community, but I don't feel welcome there because...
- ☐ If there are women in my community doing this, I don't know where they are or how to contact them
- ☐ I need childcare support to participate
- ☐ I need transportation support to participate
- ☐ I need translation of information into another language to participate
- ☐ I need sign language translation to participate
- ☐ The activities are not accessible for women with disabilities
- ☐ I don't know where to start to make the changes I want
- ☐ If you want to add something else, please tell us here...

**7. If you could tell systems and services the best way to include you in helping to improve their services, what would it be?**

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**8. If you could do anything you wanted, what would you do to make it easier for survivors to get involved in improving systems and services for women who experience abuse?**

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**9. If a system or service wanted to reach out and ask you to get involved in improving their services to women and children, what would it need to do or say to make you feel welcome?**

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**10. If you want to receive a copy of the final "guide" that we create, you can give us contact information here or you can email it directly to us at [sjac@oaith.ca](mailto:sjac@oaith.ca).**

**Name: (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/Town:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Province:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postal Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address: (Optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Would you like to be involved in Survivor Voices Project in other ways?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**12. If you answered "Yes," you can contact us at [sjac@oaith.ca](mailto:sjac@oaith.ca) for more information on how to get more involved.**