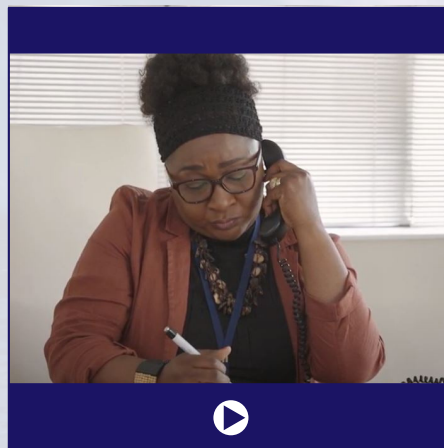


BENEATH THE ICEBERG

VIDEO SERIES GUIDE



Background

“Beneath the Iceberg” is a brief training video series created by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) utilizing funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). OAITH is a provincial association made up of VAW women shelters, VAW second stage housing programs and VAW community-based women's organizations across Ontario. OAITH works towards ending all forms of gender-based violence and oppression through advocacy, education, research and training. OAITH training resources and VAW resource library can be accessed via www.oaith.ca

This video series is intended for those working in gender-based violence agencies and may be particularly useful for:

- Generating group discussion re: common challenges and strategies for success utilized by your staff teams
- New staff working in shelter, transitional housing, intake, or crisis call/support line roles
- Agencies and workers expanding knowledge and skills of gender-based violence support via text, chat, phone, or other virtual method
- Agencies, workers, and teams interested in fostering discussion and learning related to the application of trauma-informed principles within risk assessment and risk management (including safety planning) across formats

This guide will provide learners with the following to support their skill and knowledge development:

Video Outlines
 Quick Tips for Chat Based Support
 Points for Consideration, Discussion and Critical Self-Reflection
 Homelessness, Gender-Based Violence and Intersectionality
 Exercises to Promote Critical Self-Reflection
 Video Scripts
 Additional Resources
 Appendix 1

Watch the Video Series

English Video Series: bit.ly/IcebergTrainingSeries

Acknowledgement of Contributions

OAITH would like to thank Unsafe At Home Ottawa for their engagement and expertise in development of the Part 3 Beneath the Iceberg script and content development as we examined the use of chat and text based applications. This video series and discussion guide would not be possible without the expertise of those working within shelters and it's your feedback and knowledge that has laid the groundwork for these resources.



Video Outlines

Part 1

“Beneath the Iceberg” part 1 provides a depiction of a portion of a crisis call from an older woman who is seeking residential service. Cheryl is worried about her longtime partner and is facing eviction. The caller shares her eviction, as well as past evictions and police involvement is due to rental-unit property damage caused by her partner. Due to the lack of direct physical violence, the caller has a minimized sense of potential risk of future harm.. Counsellor Angela builds rapport and helps to foster immediate safety by:

- Closing the door to the office before answering the call to reduce ambient noise and increase her focus on the caller
- Immediately validating the caller’s choice to call, sharing her name, and asking for a safe contact number
- Focusing on the caller’s concerns rather than a formal assessment procedure
- Recognizing the caller does not yet identify what she is experiencing in her long-term relationship is abuse
- Gently exploring the caller’s needs
- Identifying high-risk factors through discussion and letting the caller know she is worried for her safety
- Speaking slowly and clearly

The 3 Main Components of a Crisis Call

As described in the video, although all crisis calls are different, when the caller is able to remain on the phone safely for enough time, they often include the components of:

1. Rapport Building & Immediate Safety (this step is demonstrated within the “Under the Iceberg” video)
2. Learning More & Assessing (Assessments, Program Eligibility)
3. Supporting, Planning and Referring (Supportive Listening, Safety Planning, Resources and Referrals)

Although the video is focused on rapport building and immediate safety, Angela also identifies a number of risk factors within Cheryl’s case, including:

- Potential pending separation
- Cycle of destruction of property
- Past harassment following separation
- Past workplace stalking/harassment following separation



Part 2

“Beneath the Iceberg” Part 2 provides further insights into telephone-based crisis interaction, utilizing the same survivor and counsellor featured in Part 1. Three months have passed since Part 1, and Cheryl is reaching out to the crisis line again, primarily looking for somewhere to stay. Cheryl is staying with a friend, however is experiencing harassment from her former partner. The trust built during the first call is evident in Cheryl calling back, being willing to share her name so her previous call logs can be reviewed, and the depth of information provided related to her current situation. Through supportive discussion, Angela identifies the following current risk factors, and is concerned for Cheryl’s safety:

- Recent separation after living together within the past year
- Aggressor remains focused on reconciliation
- Aggressor alcohol use/problem drinking
- Past physical violence
- Escalation of physical violence
- Potential threats to harm/kill
- Potential stalking behaviour
- Jealousy, especially combined with perceived new partner
- Harassment

Part 2 demonstrates the balance frontline workers must find in between valuing the caller’s top priority for calling, and the need for exploration of immediate and future risk to help foster safety. As noted within survey responses, callers are much less likely to agree to “safety planning” or “risk assessment” when this is presented as pre-formulated, complicated, or merely a necessary requirement. Angela continues to keep the focus on Cheryl’s priorities throughout the call, while exploring and communicating potential risk factors.

This video helps to build on several key skills for frontline counsellors working with gender-based violence survivors, including:

1. Using trauma-informed practices to recognize the client’s current capacity for engagement in risk assessment and safety planning and promote emotional regulation
2. Exploring risk factors in an accessible, non-clinical, conversational format
3. Understanding intersections between homelessness and gender-based violence

Although we only see a portion of the call, we are informed at the end of the video that Angela continues the call and schedules an in-person appointment with Cheryl to offer further assessment, support, and planning.



Part 3

“Beneath the Iceberg” Part 3 features a crisis support interaction within a text-based (online chat) format. Cheryl has again reached out, this time on her lunch break at work. The counsellor is not aware of any past client interactions as no identifying-information is provided. However, the client is aware it is the same counsellor she has connected with previously, as the counsellor shares her name is Angela. Again, past rapport built is demonstrated by Cheryl again reaching out to the same agency, this time in a chat format for the first time.

Unique to this format, the client receives a statement related to confidentiality prior to communication with the counsellor beginning. The client shares her primary concern is her previous partner showing up unannounced at work and that they have broken up six months ago. The former partner waits outside her workplace and may be calling her workplace repeatedly. Risk factors identified include:

- Recent separation
- Past physical violence
- Potential past attempts to end life
- Workplace harassment (also potential risk to co-workers)
- Aggressor alcohol use/problem drinking
- Potential access to lethal weapon
- Past threats to kill

This video helps to build skills and knowledge of working with gender-based violence survivors which are specific to assessing risk in relation to violence/threats related to the workplace.

Although the interaction is not lengthy, Angela is able to both explore risk and offer immediate tips for safety, including:

- Setting up a code word with a trusted friend, family member, and co-worker/manager in case the client is in danger and can't speak freely (this could be helpful if the caller is ever in a vehicle with her former partner again while he is intoxicated and driving dangerously)
- Letting her manager know about risk factors and the current scope of the situation with her former partner
- Deleting her text/chat history

In this video, we have an opportunity to view the supportive interaction from beginning to conclusion, however the counsellor also sends an email to the client with further information to foster safety and awareness.



This email would likely include information on gender-based violence agencies in the client's area that offer both crisis support and transitional support and/or counselling programs. It would be helpful for the client to have both a connection to a shelter program for potential immediate safety needs, and ongoing support programs that can provide in-depth workplace-safety planning, advocacy, and collaboration. For information and further training related to workplace violence, please visit www.dvatwork.ca.

Quick Tips for Text-Based Support

The following tips have been shared by Unsafe At Home, a secure text and online chat service providing support related to violence and abuse across Ottawa and Lanark County.

A few acronyms Unsafe At Home has noted are most common in chat interactions include:

- Mb = maybe
- Btw = by the way
- Nvm = nevermind
- Idk = I don't know
- Bc = because

Other helpful tips from Unsafe At Home in relation to text-based client interactions include:

- Ensure common responses and resource information is pre-typed and easily accessible.
- When texting, try not to double text. It's better to send one big text as a chunk (within reason) than to send many texts in a row with little information, even if the information is different in each text. This is not at all as important when chatting through a webpage, but very important when texting
- Clients often use emojis, but counsellors should refrain from doing so. Emojis can be taken the wrong way and they don't give off a very professional or sincere perspective
- Consider use of platforms which allow the counsellor to share documents directly with the client
- A client may have a poor connection and have to log in and out many times. This may affect the flow of conversation, but should not stop the counsellor from providing active service. In these cases, the counsellor should suggest to the chatter that they can connect by other available methods as well, for example text-messaging, which will provide a more stable connection.
- Awareness of technology-facilitated violence is key. Remind clients to erase history and consider the device and platform they are using. For example, any text
- conversation will remain on the client's phone, so they need to be reminded and advised to delete the conversation as soon as it is over.



Scenario planning and practice sessions can be helpful when preparing frontline staff to respond to clients via text-based formats. The following training scenarios have been suggested by Unsafe At Home for use in internal training:

- Child/youth reaches out and reports abuse from parents (either with or without identifying information)
- Client asking for shelter admission, but shelter is full
- Client with legal questions related to custody and/or divorce
- Client with questions beyond the scope of GBV
- Clients outside of agency's service area
- Clients seeking a restraining order or order of protection
- Inappropriate reach outs from those seeking to "troll" the support service with inappropriate questions aimed at making the counsellor uncomfortable
- Client currently experiencing violence, who is locked in a space in their home trying to stay safe
- Trans, non-binary, gender-diverse, Two-Spirit clients
- Male-identified clients
- Clients with concerns about leaving pet behind
- Client needing language interpretation
- Reach outs focused on concern for a friend, family member or neighbour
- Client seeking to report military-affiliated aggressor

Points for Consideration, Discussion and Critical Self-Reflection

Considering these questions will assist in deepening your critical thinking in the following areas:

- Confidentiality within trauma-informed, intersectional approaches
- Intersections between homelessness and gender-based violence
- Assumptions that lead to missed opportunities
- Barriers and considerations related to justice sector involvement
- Alternatives outside of the criminal justice system that can increase survivor safety and/or perpetrator accountability
- Impacts of service format on application of trauma-informed principles
- Successes/challenges in your own work and community
- The application of critical self-reflection within your work

Confidentiality

Within Part 1 and Part 2 videos, the counsellor does not review the caller's rights and limits to confidentiality (for example, if the caller discloses a child is experiencing physical or sexual harm). Considerations related to if, when, and how to let a client know the limits to confidentiality include:



- Agency policy in relation to mandatory reporting legislation
- The impact of reviewing confidentiality limits on the client's engagement with current and future services (For example, are they likely to hang up?)
- Is the language used to discuss the rights and limits actually being understood by the client in a meaningful way? (Barriers to comprehension may include literacy level, cognitive capacity issues and difficulty processing new information following trauma)
- Is the consent being given voluntarily?
- If a client does not agree to the limits of confidentiality, how does this impact their access to services including continuing the crisis supports?
- If your agency utilizes call display on your crisis/intake/support lines, or identifies phone numbers during text-based interactions, is this information available to clients (for example, on your website)?
- Is collecting identifying information necessary to meet the client's needs?

As noted previously, one beneficial aspect of text-based service is the potential to integrate confidentiality language into initial chat conversations. Some services, such as Unsafe At Home, integrate this language informing clients of the limits of confidentiality into an automatic message which populates at the start of the chat interaction. In these cases, informed consent can still be considered, utilizing further discussion or examples to ensure the client understands these limits of what can, and can't be kept private. Some clients may also have questions about how, where, and why their text-based interactions are recorded, summarized, or otherwise detailed. Responses to these questions can be pre-typed and available to counsellors to ensure timely, consistent, and accurate responses related to data storage.

Homelessness, GBV & Intersectional Approaches

1. How does homelessness intersect with issues of gender-based violence? In the past how have you reacted/responded when clients indicate they are homeless and need a bed. Have you provided numbers to homeless shelters or do you continue with an assessment to learn more about their experience?
2. What types of questions have you asked clients in the past who've indicated they are homeless? How/what did they identify that might be under the surface that identifies safety issues?
3. When responding to clients-who identify homelessness what assumptions have you made about people who are homeless? What do you think the missed opportunities have been?
4. In what ways does your social location play a role in assessing safety and eligibility?



5. Thinking about previous client interactions you've had, how have clients responded too or reacted to calling the police or prior police involvement when asked? What have been the barriers or successes for those callers? Have you noticed any themes with those you've talked with about police involvement? What alternatives exist outside of the justice system to support caller's safety in your community?

Workplaces, GBV & Collaboration Towards Safety

1. Does your agency collect information on the survivor, or aggressor's workplace?
2. What workplace- specific information is included in the risk assessment and safety planning tools you utilize in your work?
3. What programs at your agency, if any, are effectively collaborating with workplaces to assess risk, develop safety plans, and monitor ongoing risk? How could you support this work?



Exercises to Promote Critical Self-Reflection

Exercise 1: “In Our Own Words”

After viewing the video series together, invite staff to “rewrite” one of the videos during a role play exercise, then discuss. Set aside half of your meeting time for the role-play portion, and half of the time for reflection and discussion. Ideally, volunteers are not in view of each other but are in view of the audience/observer(s) during the exercise. This can be achieved by having the client and counsellor sitting back to back, or adjusting video conferencing settings during a virtual meeting.

You will need:*

- One volunteer to play the client
- One volunteer to play the counsellor
- At least one audience member observer
- Copies of the script for the client ~~caller~~ and counsellor (print and/or electronic)

*Depending on participant numbers, another option is to split into breakout groups with one caller, counsellor and observer per group. You may choose to work with the entire script or another section.

Instructions:

First Reading: Go through the section of the script you are working with, asking those in an observation role to take notes of anything they would like to see changed, either as the counsellor or the client.

Second Reading: Go through the same portion of the script and ask staff to interrupt with “PAUSE” whenever they would like to alter something. *Example:* Staff might interrupt on page 2 when the counsellor asks “Is it safe to talk right now” and further explains what she means by ‘safe’.

Critical Reflection & Next Steps : With a manager guiding discussion, use a dry erase board/chalkboard/shared electronic document to make a list of the key learnings from the exercise, with a focus on identifying the current strengths and possible further training needs of staff in relation to trauma-informed intersectional approaches to GBV service (within and beyond crisis calls). Share this list with the participants and set a date to review and determine next steps.



Exercise 2: “A Client to Remember”

Take some time and write down your responses to the following questions which will assist in developing a case example drawn from your own experiences. Following critical self reflection, use your insights to foster ongoing dialogue with colleagues.

The most challenging scenario for me during crisis support typically includes a client who:

My first reaction is usually to:

Develop your own case example, using an experience with a survivor when your conscious intentions on a crisis support did not align with survivor outcomes.

Client details known: (age, identities of privilege/marginality, barriers to service, experiences of violence, current living situation)

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The client was focused on/had priorities including:

I was focused on/identified priorities including:



Conscious Intention (what you wanted to see happen):

Actual Outcome:

What were the structural consequences of this interaction? For example, hospitalization, involvement in the criminal justice system.

What if the survivor had similar safety concerns, but identified they were a different class, race, gender identity, ability, religion, age, citizenship status, or had different experiences with homelessness or colonization than the survivor you described above? How do you anticipate this would have changed your assumptions, choices, survivor outcomes and/or structural consequences?



Identify the implications of this quote within your life, work and agency:

“No one and no institution escapes complicity in society and its structures.”
(Kondrat, 1999).



“Beneath the Iceberg”

Crisis/Support/Intake Call Training Video Script

Written By Amber Wardell, OAITH, 2021

COUNSELLOR “Hello, Safe Door Women’s Shelter, can I help you?”

CALLER Hello, I’m not sure how you can help me but a friend gave me your number. I might need a place to stay soon. I’m really done with this place anyways!¹

COUNSELLOR OK I’m glad you called. My name is Angela. Is there a number I can call you back at if we get disconnected?

CALLER No thanks. I’ll call back if we get cut off.²

COUNSELLOR Okay. It might not always be me who answers, but someone is always here to help.³

Is it safe to talk right now?

CALLER I guess so. I’m alone if that’s what you mean.⁴

COUNSELLOR Have you ever called us before?⁵ Please let me know if there is a name you’d like me to use.⁶

CALLER No I haven’t called before. I’m not comfortable sharing my name. I live in town here not too far from you.

¹ Angela reminds herself that facing or experiencing homelessness does not mean the caller isn’t a good fit for services.

² Angela will let the next staff on duty know about the caller either way in case there is follow up.

³ The caller may benefit from support over the phone again to increase safety, whether or not they ever access in-person or virtual services.

⁴ Angela has determined there is no immediate physical threat, but the caller doesn’t really know what she means by safe in terms of threat of violence and the call being monitored.

⁵ If yes, Angela could ask the caller for a few minutes to look up and review her previous call logs while she keeps her on the phone.

⁶ Angela phrases this in a way which lets the caller know they don’t have to use their real name- this will help her log the call.



COUNSELLOR Okay we can talk more about that, I know you mentioned issues with your housing, do you live alone?⁷

CALLER No I live with someone and we both need somewhere to stay soon. Your place is a shelter right? I'm just frustrated with housing- they say I have to be out in the next 30 days but I have nowhere to go.

COUNSELLOR Yes we have a shelter service but can also help in other ways. I'd like to ask you some more questions to get a sense of what might be a good fit.

Can you tell me more about the trouble you are having with your housing and the person you currently live with? ⁸

CALLER It's Jeff that I live with and I'm worried about him too. He has a lot of stress at work. We got a notice that we have to be out soon and can't afford anything else.⁹

COUNSELLOR I'm sorry to hear about the eviction notice and everything you are going through.¹⁰ I'm so glad you've reached out to connect today. Do you know the reason why housing is asking you to leave?

CALLER *Silence.*

COUNSELLOR It's ok, take your time.¹¹

CALLER Things are a bit of a mess... there are some holes in the wall.

COUNSELLOR Okay what are the holes from?

CALLER Jeff gets a little out of control sometimes but we tried to fix things up.¹²

COUNSELLOR Can you tell me more about what happens when Jeff gets out of control and how often this happens?

⁷ Angela could also ask if anyone will be home soon.

⁸ Angela recognizes the words abuse, assault and/or violence may not resonate with the caller.

⁹ The caller is focused on housing which Angela must keep in mind as she assesses for abuse/violence, and program eligibility.

¹⁰ Building rapport through empathy.

¹¹ Angela recognizes there is often meaning in silence.

¹² Angela now has confirmation there is a potential safety risk, without ever using the words abuse or violence. She plans to ask more about substance use for both Jeff and the caller later on once rapport is built.



CALLER He gets mad sometimes is all. Not very often. It's been a bad year for both of us. The real problem is this letter from housing. I don't know what to do.¹³

COUNSELLOR Reaching out today was a great step. We have a housing program that might be able to help but I'd like to talk more about your relationship with Jeff right now- is that ok?¹⁴

CALLER Yeah I guess. My friend who gave me this number isn't a fan of Jeff's either.¹⁵

COUNSELLOR Does your friend worry about you and your safety sometimes?¹⁶

CALLER Yeah Jeff gets mad and punches holes in things but he has never hurt me.

COUNSELLOR Are you ever afraid of Jeff or what he might do when he gets out of control?¹⁷

CALLER I don't know.¹⁸

COUNSELLOR How long have you been in a relationship with Jeff?¹⁹

CALLER On and off for a decade- we got kicked out of our last place too as the neighbours kept calling the police. About 5 years ago we split up for a while but he kept calling, coming around, showing up at my work even.²⁰

COUNSELLOR Was Jeff ever charged?

¹³ If the caller has future service, a calendar/calendar page will be a useful tool to use with the caller to determine frequency of abusive incidents. This can be used along with the J. Campbell Danger Assessment

¹⁴ Angela is acknowledging where the caller is at and her main fear being eviction, rather than violence/harm or Jeff.

¹⁵ A friend is concerned for the caller's safety, and could be a support in developing a code word for use in an emergency

¹⁶ Angela has developed rapport and can be more direct, using this warning sign.

¹⁷ Angela uses the same language the caller has used to describe the abusive behaviour

¹⁸ Angela recognizes the many barriers the caller may have in sharing her experiences when she hears this and asks a simpler question.

¹⁹ Angela keeps the assessment questions conversational, so it doesn't seem like an interrogation.

²⁰ Cycle of violence in destruction of property, possible coercive control demonstrated by harassment and workplace stalking.



CALLER No never. I wouldn't want to see him get in trouble like that and what would jail really do anyways.

COUNSELLOR I can understand that, but I'm worried about your safety.²¹

CALLER Okay but things aren't really that bad right now.²²

COUNSELLOR What does 'really bad' look like?²³

CALLER You know, smashing things and yelling. Sometimes throwing things.

COUNSELLOR That sounds like it would be frightening. Sometimes smashing and yelling can escalate and become physical violence very quickly. Has Jeff ever threatened you?²⁴

CALLER (*hesitant*) I don't think so.

COUNSELLOR I wonder if it would be helpful to talk to someone more about your housing troubles and some of your worries with Jeff's behaviour? You have the right to feel safe and you have choices.²⁵

CALLER Yeah, maybe, we have to be out soon. Can I come and stay there if I can't find a place? I might like to take a break from Jeff for a while.

COUNSELLOR Let's talk more about that. Do you have any supports like family, friends, or professionals?²⁶

CALLER Not really, my daughter lives an hour away but doesn't visit much or have room for me. Jeff doesn't like it when I spend time with friends.²⁷

²¹ Angela will follow up later on about the caller's workplace as a possible safety/support and workplace safety planning.

²² Angela recognizes barriers to police involvement and validates this.

²³ Angela knows this does not mean the situation is not high risk, and could escalate quickly especially with the upcoming eviction.

²⁴ Using the caller's language.

²⁵ Angela is starting to shift in the language she is using, and is using what she has learned during the other stages of the call to clearly name her concerns

²⁶ Angela recognizes it is beyond her scope to help the caller fully realize the extent of the abuse/violence, risk of violence, and thoroughly address the caller's needs. She hopes to connect her with the Housing Support and Ongoing Counselling programs but will need more information.

²⁷ Angela doesn't want to lose the caller by stating the shelter is full yet and will first determine other possible resources as part of a plan towards increased safety.



COUNSELLOR That must be very difficult. Sometimes discouraging someone from seeing their friends and family can be a tactic to gain control in a relationship. I'm worried about the risk of things getting worse with Jeff and you not being safe, and how isolated you are from supports.²⁸

CALLER I guess I worry sometimes too. It's been really stressful with everything going on with housing and the neighbours.

COUNSELLOR You were brave in giving us a call and reaching out. It can be a risky time when you are thinking about leaving someone with behaviours like Jeff, so let's do some planning for your safety and talk about your options.

We currently don't have space (this would be just for you) but what I can do is keep you on the line while I call another service like ours and see if they have space, and we can also help with housing and other types of support like counselling.

CALLER Okay and is that like housing?²⁹

COUNSELLOR We have a housing worker who can help with that, whether or not you stay at a shelter.

CALLER I need help finding a new place for sure. I'd like to talk more about Jeff too I guess.³⁰

COUNSELLOR Okay great, I'm wondering if it is safe to put you on hold for a few minutes while I connect with the shelter nearest to us about somewhere safe to stay right now or if things get worse with Jeff.

Will Jeff be home anytime soon?

CALLER Not for a while.^{31 32}

²⁸ Risk factor: isolation from friends, family and supports.

²⁹ Angela is clearly identifying risk factors and increasing the caller's knowledge around abusive behaviours.

³⁰ The caller is still focused on long-term housing and not shelter, but being aware of a residential service option is still vital as risk is dynamic and can escalate quickly.

³¹ Angela has opened a door to future awareness building around abuse, healthy relationships and strategies for safety.

³² Angela will inform the caller of how to erase evidence of the call before they disconnect.



Video conclusion notes:

Angela will now get the caller's identifying information and place her on hold if safe to do so. Angela wants to make sure the caller has an immediate option for safety and lets the caller know if she needs to go to a different shelter she can help arrange safe transportation.

As part of safety planning, Angela will suggest the caller immediately develop a code word with her daughter and the referring friend in case she needs immediate assistance. There is not enough time to do a full risk assessment but there are enough indicators of abuse and safety concerns that the caller would likely be eligible for most VAW shelters in Ontario.

Ultimately, Angela will learn that the caller's partner is unemployed, has a history of suicide attempts, and often becomes intoxicated which has been increasing in frequency. Angela will book follow up contact with the caller to keep her connected while she waits for a transitional housing support worker, GBV focused counselling, as well as community based services. The crisis call is an important first step to increasing her safety.



“Beneath the Iceberg”- Part 2

Crisis/Support/Intake Call Training Video Script

Amber Wardell, OAITH, 2023

COUNSELLOR Hello, Safe Door Women’s Shelter, can I help you?

CALLER Hi (*tentative*)

COUNSELLOR How can I help today?

CALLER I’m not sure, I might need a place to stay ³³

COUNSELLOR Ok I’m glad you called. My name is Angela, Is there a number I can call you back if we get disconnected?

CALLER I’d rather not give my number, but last time I called I said my name was Cheryl - with a ‘C’.

COUNSELLOR Thanks for letting me know, is Cheryl still a good name to use?

CALLER: Yes thanks

COUNSELLOR: Please give me a moment to look up your previous call. Is it safe to talk right now?

*Typing sounds*³⁴

CALLER: I’m alone for a while

COUNSELLOR: Ok thank you, please give me a moment. ³⁵

³³ *The first few moments of a support or crisis call are critical. The caller can be easily discouraged as they may not feel as though they deserve service or are experiencing “real” violence. Angela knows the shelter program is full, but waits to share this information until she has further information about the risk level and can offer alternatives to help build safety.*

³⁴ *Angela notes risk factors identified from previous contact identified including Jeff’s suicide attempts, increased alcohol use, and unemployment.*

³⁵ *Angela does not place the caller on hold, as she has very little information about the current location and safety of the caller. She reviews the previous call log, which was from 3 months earlier. Cheryl had been referred to the Transitional Housing Support Program, but missed two appointments and was ultimately discharged from the program. She also missed a scheduled follow up appointment with another member of the residential team.*



Silence

COUNSELLOR: Thanks Cheryl, I've reviewed the notes from the last time you called and it was actually me you spoke with.³⁶

CALLER: Oh ok, I thought maybe it was.
Voice cracks, starts to cry

Things have gotten a lot worse since last time I called...

COUNSELLOR: I'm sorry to hear things have gotten worse, I'm here to listen and help however I can. Can you tell me more about where you are right now?

CALLER: I'm at my daughter's place- no one else is here right now.

COUNSELLOR: Ok and last time you called we talked about Jeff and some housing issues, are those the things that have been getting worse?

CALLER: Yes I can't remember exactly what was happening back then, but right now I'm staying with a friend and could use a place to stay.³⁷

COUNSELLOR: Is Jeff still in the picture?

CALLER: Well, kind of. I'm not sure where he's staying but I ended things after we both had to move out about 2 months ago.³⁸ I wasted 10 years of my life with him- 10 years I'll never get back. No one understands why I was with him so long.³⁹ *Cheryl starts crying again.*

COUNSELLOR: There are so many barriers to leaving a relationship, especially one where you don't always feel safe. It took courage for you to end the relationship with Jeff, and for you to reach out today. I'm here to help. Let's take a few deep breaths together Cheryl. If you'd like to, you can 'plant' your feet firmly on the ground which might help too.

³⁶ Although it's important Cheryl feels as though she can call at anytime to speak to any staff member, confirming Angela was the same staff she previously spoke with helps build trust through honesty and transparency

³⁷ Although Cheryl is experiencing homelessness, she may also be at high risk of harm or lethality and appropriate for services.

³⁸ Angela identifies recent separation as a risk factor for physical harm and lethality, especially after living together within the past year.

³⁹ Cheryl is struggling with the impacts of long-term isolation as a result of an abusive relationship. Although Angela might like to move on to risk assessment questions, she first needs to acknowledge Cheryl's feelings, where she is at, and help her to emotionally regulate so she can utilize her prefrontal cortex.



*Angela counts out three in and out deep breaths.*⁴⁰

COUNSELLOR: Do you see Jeff?

CALLER: I've told him I'm done but he keeps coming around the place I'm staying and sometimes my daughter's place... drunk as usual.^{41 42}

COUNSELLOR: What happens when he comes around?

CALLER: He's mostly talk. He bangs on the door, says some things and leaves when I threaten to call the police. My friend doesn't really want me staying here anymore because of all the trouble. He's been really great, but him and Jeff don't really get along⁴³.

COUNSELLOR: Ok we'll definitely talk about some options for somewhere to stay.⁴⁴ You deserve to feel safe. Does Jeff ever get physical, or physically threaten you?⁴⁵

CALLER: Yes he's pushed me down before, and into the wall right before we moved out. It got pretty bad there near the end. He's texted a few times that I'll regret leaving him, but I'm not sure about threats.⁴⁶

COUNSELLOR: This sounds like it could be a threat Cheryl. Are you worried Jeff may try to hurt you?⁴⁷

CALLER: I'm not sure.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ *Even via phone, Angela can use the regulation of her own parasympathetic system to help regulate Cheryl's, which after years of over and under stimulation may result in difficulty self regulating and coping with feelings of stress, anxiety and fear.*

⁴¹ *Angela notes the caller is currently at her daughter's home, which Jeff may attend uninvited.*

⁴² *Angela identifies heavy alcohol use/problem drinking as a risk factor for physical harm and lethality.*

⁴³ *Angela notes the dynamic of Cheryl's relationship with her friend is unknown.*

⁴⁴ *Angela acknowledges that Cheryl's top priority in calling is finding a safe place to stay*

⁴⁵ *Angela avoids the terms 'violence' and 'abuse' which have a different meaning for everyone*

⁴⁶ *This may or may not be a vague threat. Angela identifies physical violence as a risk factor, as well as recent increase in physical violence.*

⁴⁷ *Cheryl has not used the words abuse or violence, so Angela chooses language which may be more accessible.*

⁴⁸ *Cheryl may need more time to reflect on this question, but also may be feeling overwhelmed by too many risk assessment questions, even within an informal, conversational format. It is also difficult for Cheryl to accurately assess her risk when she has not yet had meaningful support*



*Silence*⁴⁹

CALLER: I forgot about something. Jeff did leave a note on my car a week or so ago, and it gave me a bad feeling. It wasn't a threat I don't think, but it said something about me moving on and I could tell he was jealous. He's never liked this guy I'm staying with and has made that pretty clear. I came out of the coffee shop and it was under my windshield.⁵⁰

COUNSELLOR: Cheryl, I'm worried about you as it sounds like Jeff's behaviour is getting more and more out of control. If he knew you were at the coffee shop, he may be following you which is very concerning. Even though you've decided the relationship is over, it sounds like Jeff is not accepting that and may try to hurt you.⁵¹

CALLER: *sigh*. My daughter worries about me too. She doesn't have room for me to stay here, but she's never trusted Jeff.⁵²

COUNSELLOR: I wonder about coming in today to meet with me? We can talk more about what's going on with Jeff, and options for a safe place to stay.

CALLER: I guess that would be ok. I'll need the address.

related to the violence she's experienced.

⁴⁹ *Angela gives Cheryl time to think about this question and reflect on their conversation so far.*

⁵⁰ *This one statement contains several key risk factors which now have heightened Angela's concern for the caller's immediate safety. 1. Jeff may be stalking Cheryl to have known she was at the coffee shop, a key risk factor and potentially new and escalated behaviour. 2. The placement of the note indicates it may have been intended as a threat, even if this is not fully recognized by Cheryl at this time 3. Jealousy, especially intense or violent jealousy of a perceived new partner.*

⁵¹ *Angela is now identifying some of the risk factors for Cheryl to increase her knowledge of her own risk.*

⁵² *Cheryl is noting she has explored alternative housing options but can't stay with family. Angela notes friends and family are both aware of the abuse and in some instances have witnessed abuse. During further risk assessment and safety planning, Angela will explore Jeff's direct risk to friends and family. As Jeff knows where Cheryl is staying with her friend, is jealous of her friend, has attended uninvited while intoxicated, her safety could be increased through safety planning and admission to a residential shelter program.*



Video Conclusion notes:

Angela is a skilled counsellor who will continue to engage Cheryl during an in-person appointment utilizing trauma-informed approaches. Angela recognizes that during past calls and agency contact, trying to arrange for a follow up appointment and transitional service has been unsuccessful in meeting Cheryl's needs. Rather than asking Cheryl to account for past missed appointments or lack of engagement in services as this is sometimes framed, Angela understands today is a window of opportunity and offers an in-person appointment for further assessment, support and planning. Cheryl's risk factors in relation to Jeff are significant and warrant shelter admission, however the program is full. Options Angela can explore include using a tool to determine a formal risk rating; this may allow Cheryl to be offered a shelter bed space, while a lower-risk client is relocated to a hotel/motel program if available. Angela may also explore space at a nearby shelter, or one that is farther away from where Jeff is residing, however still accessible for her supports and workplace. Once Cheryl attends the shelter, Angela can also explore safety planning at home, in the community, and in Cheryl's workplace.



“Beneath the Iceberg”- Part 3

Crisis/Support/Intake Call Training Video Script

Amber Wardell, OAITH, 2023

COUNSELLOR: *(noise comes through on computer indicating new chat message)*

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Hello, thank you for reaching out. A counselor will be joining the chat momentarily. This chat is end-to-end encrypted and there will be no record of the chat once this window is closed. Please note the counsellor has a duty to report harm or neglect of a person under 18, and this chat service is intended for those over 18 years of age. Please select OK if this sounds OK and you are an adult. You can also click “more information” to learn more about your rights to and limits of confidentiality during this chat.⁵³

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: OK

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Hi, I’m Angela. Can you tell me how I can help today?

CHAT SCREEN: *client typing (...)*

⁵³ The client has already been asked their preferred language and identified English.



CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Take your time. I'm here. ⁵⁴

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: My ex keeps showing up at my work and I can't get him to stop. I'm worried I'm going to lose my job. I finally got my own place but now he won't leave me alone. I can't talk right now, I'm on my lunch break and am at my desk.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: I'm here to help. When did you break up?

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: We have a few times. Last time was about 6 months ago.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Can you tell me more about the type of work you do and what happens when your ex comes to your work?⁵⁵

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: I'm a receptionist. He just waits outside in the parking lot until I'm done. Then when I come out of the door, he leaves. Someone is also calling and hanging up which I know is him.

⁵⁴ *Everyone types at different speeds. Ensuring your chat service can let you know when the client is typing is helpful.*

⁵⁵ *Because the interaction is via chat, several related questions can be asked at once without overwhelming the client*



CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Ok thank you. Has he ever physically hurt you or threatened to hurt you before?

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: yes, both...

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Can you tell me about the worst it has gotten?⁵⁶

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: he has pushed me down

CHAT SCREEN: *client typing (...)*

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: 2x⁵⁷ when he was really mad he said he would 'end me'. He's driven CRAZY with me in the car before, right after the breakup. He was drunk (usually is).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ There are a number of helpful questions the counsellor could ask to further explore physical violence and threats, however knowing their chat could become disconnected at any time, she asks about 'the worst it has gotten' as clients will typically associate this with the greatest level of fear felt as a result of abusive behaviour. They likely experienced this fear during or after the highest risk violence that has occurred, for example, after being strangled to the point of unconsciousness (they may refer to as choked, grabbed around the neck or headlocked). It's also important to remember significant physical harm, and lethality has occurred in cases with no previous physical violence or threats.

⁵⁷ During chat interactions, users are likely to use abbreviations. Remember they may be accessing your service (if applicable) from a phone or other device that does not have a full keyboard.

⁵⁸ As there is no conveyance of tone within a text-based conversation, emphasis through bolding, capitalization, intentional misspelling (i.e. veeerrryy to heighten the meaning of the word 'very') should be carefully considered. It can be assumed from the client's use of all capitalization with "CRAZY" that this unsafe driving was extreme, and posed a risk to her physical wellbeing. The counsellor identifies problem drinking/excessive alcohol use as a risk factor for harm and lethality.



CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: That must have been really
frightening.⁵⁹

CHAT SCREEN: *client typing (...) client typing (...) client typing (...)*
No typing, no message comes through
Client typing(...)

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: I try not to think about it. ⁶⁰

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Has he ever been charged?

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: No, I don't want police. I've tried
calling and no help.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: I can understand that and this
is completely your choice⁶¹. Do you live alone?

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: Yes.

⁵⁹ *Rather than continuing with a risk assessment focused follow-up question, the counsellor takes time to acknowledge the impact of the abusive behaviour, which is often minimized by both the survivor, the aggressor, and those around them.*

⁶⁰ *The client typed for some time but then may have erased this as the message that did come through was short. The counsellor recognizes the limits of chat-based counselling in fully exploring her needs, and understanding of the abuse she has experienced and it's impacts.*

⁶¹ *If the client was unsure about police involvement, the counsellor could explore pros and cons of criminal justice involvement.*



CHAT SCREEN - FROM COUNSELLOR: Does your workplace know about what is going on with your ex? There are laws in Ontario that say workplaces need to support employees who have a safety concern from a current or ex partner. ⁶²

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT- A little.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Does your ex have access to a gun?

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: Idk. ⁶³

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: I'm concerned for your safety, such as your ex's harassment at work, your recent breakup, and his past threats and violence. You deserve to feel safe at work, home, and in the community. ⁶⁴

⁶² The counsellor is offering a pathway to a certain type of resources which are legislation related. She's mentioned this very briefly to not overwhelm the client with potentially unwanted information. The counsellor will let the client take the lead in terms of how much information to provide about workplace related legislation and protections.

⁶³ The counsellor understands this abbreviation of "I don't know" and notes the client is not sure and he may have access to a gun or other weapon. Many clients with a high level of information about their aggressor will answer definitively ("yes" or "no") to this question. Follow up questions related to weapons could be related to if her ex partner hunts, his line of work (i.e. law enforcement), and any past threats involving weapons.

⁶⁴ The counsellor has now switched from a focus on assessing risk factors to managing risk. She has identified the client's situation as potentially high risk and would like to provide resources, further connection, and immediate safety planning while they are still connected. Depending on the length of the interaction, high risk factors she may identify with the client include the harassment at the workplace, the recent separation, past threats, and past physical



CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: ok

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: I'm wondering about an abuse ⁶⁵ expert helping to safety plan and maybe even talk with your workplace.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: ok that might be good

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Before I make that connection, can we review a few ideas to help increase your safety?

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: ok but I have to go soon

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Understood

CHAT SCREEN-FROM COUNSELLOR: One idea is to set up a code word with a friend, family member, and a co worker/manager in case you are in danger and can't speak freely (for example, you are in the car with your ex and he's driving unsafely).

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: I could probably do that

violence.

⁶⁵ *The counsellor could say gender-based violence but abuse is more likely to be immediately understood by the client.*



CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Do you think there is at least one person at work you trust enough to let them know you are worried for your safety, especially going to your car at the end of the day?

CHAT SCREEN-FROM CLIENT: We are pretty small and don't have HR or anything. 1 manager knows I had a bad breakup.⁶⁶

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Since your ex is coming to and contacting your workplace, it's a situation that could also put your coworkers at risk. Letting them know what's happening should not put your job in jeopardy.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: Mb.⁶⁷ I don't know what I would say. I have to go soon.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: my email is lovesdogz@outlook.com, can you send me some info? ⁶⁸

CHAT SCREEN - FROM COUNSELLOR: Absolutely. You can also connect back to the chat later or give us a call to do some practice

⁶⁶ "Bad" is subjective and may not include any details of abuse during the relationship, ongoing harassment, or threat to the workplace.

⁶⁷ The counsellor understands this abbreviation as "maybe".

⁶⁸ Often, clients will not want to share identifying information via a chat-based interaction. However, in this scenario, the client has had multiple previous interactions with the agency and feels comfortable providing an email address that does not include her name.



around talking to your manager if this might help. If you let me know the area you are in, I can provide some resources for an abuse expert (through a transitional support program or counselling program) to help with your workplace and talk more about your safety.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM CLIENT: Ok thx I'm near Stoney Creek.

CHAT SCREEN- FROM COUNSELLOR: Thank you I will send that information within the hour. It took strength to reach out to us today and we hope you will reach out again. A reminder you can delete this text/chat history on your end to avoid a record of our conversation.

Chat ended

Video conclusion notes:

During this relatively brief interaction, the counsellor was able to assess significant risk to the client's safety, and potential risk to her workplace. Time was spent conveying this risk to the client, while concrete safety planning steps were taken to mitigate immediate risk. The client developed enough trust for the counsellor throughout the interaction to provide her email address, which allows the support to continue. It's important to remember during text-based interactions that the sense of urgency and level of emotional distress of the client is very difficult to gauge accurately. Having information and common responses pre-typed can be helpful in ensuring timely text-based responses. If your agency is focused on increasing worker capacity in text-based service provision, connecting with another gender-based violence agency which has experience providing service in these formats can be extremely helpful.



Additional Resources

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative. Creating Safety Plans with Vulnerable Populations to Reduce the Risk of Repeated Violence and Domestic homicide, 2019. *(PDF Resource available via <https://bit.ly/SafetyPlanswithVulnerablePop>)*

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative. Domestic Violence Risk Assessment: Informing Safety Planning & Risk Management, 2016. *(PDF Resource available via: http://cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/Brief_2_Final_2.pdf)*

Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. DV at Work Risk Screening Tool. *(Risk Screening tool that can be used for discussion with workplaces, a number of related tools also available)*
<https://www.dvatwork.ca/risk-screening-tool>

Centre for Substance Abuse Treatment. Trauma-Informed care in Behavioural Health Services, 2014. *(Quick list of grounding techniques to help a client emotionally regulate: <https://bit.ly/Trauma-InformedHealthServices>)*

Childhelp. Text and Chat in Hotlines: Initial Discussion of Best Practices, 2021:
<https://childhelpheline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/PACTECH-Topical-Brief-April-2019.pdf>

Ivey, A. et al. Intentional Interviewing and Counseling: Facilitating Client Development in a Multicultural Society, 2017. *(Training Manual)*

Kondrat, M.E. Who is the 'self' in self-aware: Professional self-awareness from a critical theory perspective, 1999. *(PDF Article available via https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/1808/7533/1/Kondrat_The%20Self%20in%20Self-Aware.pdf)*

Lippie, C. et al. The Impact of Mandatory Reporting Laws on Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence: Intersectionality, Help-Seeking and the Need for Change, 2020. *(Journal Article available via <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10896-019-00103-w>)*

National Network to End Domestic Violence. Best Practices for Chat Based Service Delivery, 2019: <https://www.techsafety.org/chat-best-practices>



OAITH. A Guide to Critical Reflection: Understanding and Using a Feminist Anti-Oppression Framework, 2010. (PDF Guide available via http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Training/ARAO_Manual.pdf)

OAITH. Breaking Through: Rethinking Assessment Practices in Ontario Shelters, 2011. (PDF Resource available via http://www.oaith.ca/assets/library/Breaking_Through_Rethinking_Assessment_OAITH_2011.pdf)

OAITH. Foundations of VAW Practice. (Online course accessible via: training.oaith.ca)

OAITH. Gender-Based Violence, Technology and Safety (Online course accessible via: training.oaith.ca).

OAITH. Her Brain Chose For Her, 2019. (Online Application via herbrainchose.ca and PDF Training Resource via <https://herbrainchose.oaith.ca/assets/PDF/her-brain-chose-for-her-oaith.pdf>)

OAITH. Intermediate Foundations of GBV Practice. (Online course accessible via: training.oaith.ca).

OAITH. The Neurobiology of Gender-Based Violence Across the Lifespan (Online course accessible via: training.oaith.ca).

OAITH. Risk Management and Working with Older Women Experiencing Abuse. (Online course accessible Via: training.oaith.ca).

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. Using Technology to Better Support Survivors: Literature Review, 2018. <https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/briefs/briefpdfs/LB-33.pdf>

Women's Refuge Commission. Guidance for GBV service providers: Informed consent process with adult survivors with disabilities (Training Tool PDF available via <https://bit.ly/3GU0dA4>)

Feedback

If you/your staff teams have feedback regarding the video or this video guide, please contact OAITH's Learning & Development Coordinator, Amber Wardell via amber@oaith.ca



Appendix 1- Participating Shelter Survey Summary

Survey responses indicated that in addition to service shortages (full shelter programs), the crisis call scenarios typically presenting the highest level of difficulty for frontline staff (as reported by both frontline staff across programs and management) include:

- Callers who do not use the words violence, abuse, or safety or seem confused about why they are calling
- Callers facing homelessness/barriers to housing or experiencing long-term homelessness
- Callers requiring residential service (when the shelter is full)

When asked to identify areas of improvement and potential gaps in capacity related to crisis call response, respondents noted:

- Taking every crisis call seriously and always doing a safety plan and assessing risk
- Ensuring trauma-informed counselling skills
- Improving consistency in crisis-call responses
- Identifying needs/issues that motivated the call, not just the presenting issue
- Identifying homelessness and eligibility for service
- Consistent risk assessment tools and processes, which include easy to use checklists and factors such as technology-facilitated violence, risk from relationships beyond current or former partner and history of relationship/context of violence
- Improving risk assessment and safety planning via text based and virtual communication formats
- Immediate and ongoing safety planning
- Transitioning from risk assessment to safety planning and introducing risk assessment and safety planning within conversation with clients in general

Overall, respondents again indicated training focused on assisting frontline workers in identifying the deeper meaning behind the information clients choose to share, how this information is shared, and what lies beneath the surface when it comes to survivors within time-limited, crisis based support interactions. In particular, agencies offering crisis support via chat, text, or messaging (43 respondents total) noted gaps in available resources and training specific to text-based crisis support.

Based on this feedback, the video series was expanded in April 2023 to include Beneath the Iceberg Part 2 and Part 3. This video guide has also been expanded to include information to guide worker and agency engagement with the video series.



The goal of this video series is to increase the capacity of frontline workers to effectively respond to GBV survivors utilizing trauma-informed frameworks when providing phone based crisis-counselling services across VAW shelter agencies in Ontario.

Access this document online via: bit.ly/VideoGuideOAITH

