

York University
Sexual Assault Awareness, Prevention, and Response Policy Working Group
Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday, June 25, 2015

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Location: 956 Kaneff Tower

Attendance: Mina Rajabi Paak, Elana Shugar, Rob Castle, Margaret Macharia, Aldo Altomare, Siraz Chatha, Polly MacFarlane, Rodney John de Roché, Jessica Thyriar, Noël Badiou, Chenthoori Malankov.

Regrets: Liisa Stephenson, Catherine Salole, Deb Hansen, Grace Permaul, Arden Maaliq, Prakash Amarasooriya, Daulton Scott, CWTP Representative.

Call to Order

- The Working Group welcomed new members:
 - Rodney de Rochè from TBLGAY
 - Chenthoori Malankov from United South Asians at York (USAY)
- E. Shugar reviewed the group agreement for ensuring a safe space during the meeting. The group agreement will be displayed at every Working Group meeting.
- The Meeting Notes from June 4th were reviewed and approved.
- There is some clarification w.r.t. the order of the process for Personal Counselling Services (PCS) as discussed on May 15th.
 - P. MacFarlane will send E. Shugar an email with the revisions.

Other Business

- E. Shugar met with the Student Service group representative to outline the process and discuss the Working Group's role in the Policy and Procedures development.

- R. Castle gave a brief overview of what the Working Group has been doing since December 2013.
 - The Working Group began with an extensive procedure mapping process of all the services and resources available at York for survivors of sexual assault.
 - Through the process, the Working Group has been identifying areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
 - The Policy is part of York's commitment to addressing sexual assault; it is reflective of the University's stance on the issue and approach to addressing it.
 - The Policy on Sexual Assault Awareness, Prevention and Response was approved by the Board of Governors earlier this year.
 - The Working Group will continue with the process and reviewing current practices and processes and developing comprehensive response procedures. Currently, the Working Group is reviewing the flowcharts that came out of the mapping process. The hope is to have the right procedures in place by September.
- R. Castle invited M. Gray and 2-3 other members of Silence Is Violence (SiV) to attend a Working Group meeting. M. Gray has accepted on behalf of SiV.
 - SiV will be talking about their recommendations and how they pertain to graduate students.
 - The proposed date and time is July 8th at 12:30 p.m. (Please note that the Working Group meeting starts at 12:00 p.m.)
 - Although they have agreed to attend a Working Group meeting, they have not confirmed their availability for July 8th.
 - **ACTION:** E. Shugar will forward the Working Group the June 9th Letter from SiV including the recommendations.
- N. Badiou briefly discussed the Ontario government's invitation for applications for funding for sexual violence education initiatives.
 - The Ontario Women's Directorate is currently soliciting applications for funding for sexual violence training initiatives.
 - **ACTION:** E. Shugar will forward the application document to everyone.

- The funding is for training that will provide professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to foster a more responsive and supportive environment for women who have experienced sexual violence.
- The submission deadline for applications is July 20th at 5:00 p.m. and applications must be submitted online through the Grants Ontario website.
 - In order to submit an application, applicants are required to register at least three weeks before the application deadline.
 - **ACTION:** Registration on the Grants Ontario website needs to be completed by next week.
- The Centre for Human Rights has ideas for training initiatives but does not have the available resources to put together the proposal.
 - R. Castle indicated that VPFA also has some potential initiatives in mind - although there is great interest the application deadline is fast approaching.
 - If York was going to move forward with the proposal, the idea is to have student unions and groups involved in this initiative. The University would be responsible for putting together the proposal.
 - **ACTION:** E. Shugar will send a call-out for people to attend a brainstorming session.
- A Toronto Police representative is slated to join in the conversation to discuss how TPS handles sexual assault for our own procedure development.
 - TPS procedures will be taken into consideration to better understand any overlap in process.
 - **Q:** When is TPS coming?
 - The Working Group needs to complete the reviewing of our processes first before they can attend. The representative will attend a meeting in August most likely. The Working Group will have that discussion before any procedures are formalized.
 - The most important thing is to be able to have procedures that meet the needs of the community.

- Inspector Hussein, who is in charge of the division, will be joining us.
- The Working Group recognizes that some members are uncomfortable with having a conversation with TPS and we will be respectful of that.

Review of Sexual Assault Survivors' Support Line & Leadership (SASSL) Process

- SASSL is a student-run organization that offers support to survivors, friends, family and the community through a 24/7 support line and in-person.
- SASSL is available for anyone, community and non-community members
- An individual makes contact with SASSL coordinators or volunteers through walk-ins (during office hours) or crisis calls, which are the most common way to contact SASSL.
 - Upon contact, the SASSL representative makes sure the survivor is in a safe-place.
 - The conversation is essentially anonymous and confidential. However, the SASSL rep will inform the individual that if they are at risk or if a minor is involved, they may be required to break confidentiality.
 - If the individual poses a risk to themselves or anyone else, the SASSL rep may ask the survivor to report it or SASSL will contact EMS or TPS.
 - If the individual is a minor, SASSL has a responsibility to contact Children's Aid Society.
 - It is important to note that SASSL calls do not have any identification markers – meaning that although SASSL is obligated to report the circumstances they will have very limited information to report.
- Confidentiality is always subject to provincial and federal laws. Even though there is no legislative duty to report, the liability attaches itself due to the nature of the organization.
- If the individual is in a safe place and is not a minor, SASSL proceeds with supporting the survivor.
 - This is done through active listening: validating experiences and offering resources depending on what the survivor's needs are.
- If the individual requests a referral, SASSL will proceed to refer them to the appropriate resources on campus or external to campus.

- If the individual is requesting financial support, there are crisis funds available.
 - The SASSL crisis fund averages \$5,000-\$10,000 per year. This is a sizeable amount of the operating budget.
 - SASSL will inform the individual that they need to come into the office to fill out a short form with information about their demographics and a description of how they have been affected financially.
 - Coordinators at SASSL will review the request.
 - Within 24-48 hours, SASSL will contact the individual and let them know whether or not they have been approved for funding.
 - The financial request has to be approved by the majority of the coordinators.
 - If the individual meets the criteria for the crisis fund and funding is available, SASSL will write a check which the individual will come and collect.
 - If the individual has been informed that they cannot access the crisis fund, they will be provided other referrals where possible.
- The Women and Trans People Safety grant totals \$50,000 per year and has been this amount for the last 25 years. This grant is provided to Universities from the Ministry of Training.
 - Part of this grant is put towards programming and the other part is used for crisis funding. These funds are disbursed through CWTP and OSCR.
 - SASSL does not have access to utilize this money for crisis grants.
- For future administrative review, there should be a larger conversation about the disbursement of crisis grants. People should be treated similarly (depending on the person's circumstances) regardless of point of access.
 - There should be consistency of how to apply for a crisis grant.
 - The Working Group can discuss having a complimentary funding option.
 - **ACTION:** Conduct a scan and mapping of the crisis grants available on campus.
 - D. Hansen used to have an inventory of the crisis grants available.
 - The crisis grant application process could be consolidated to make it as seamless as possible for survivors while being respectfully mindful of other organizations' history, works and services.

- **Suggestion:** Use of an online form for application of crisis grants.
- If the individual requests additional support and referrals, SASSL will provide options.
- A SASSL crisis call averages between 30-40 min. Individuals who want to have a longer conversation could be asked to call back at a later time.
 - SASSL has an office line and a 24hr crisis line. When a coordinator is in the office they usually have both lines. When they leave, they forward the crisis line to representative (coordinator/volunteer) in charge of the line for the evening.
 - The 24hr crisis line is usually forwarded to a cellphone which the volunteers take home with them. The Working Group recognizes that this is a personal, logistic and financial burden upon SASSL representatives.
 - **Q:** What if an individual says that they called and no one picked up?
 - If a call is not picked up, it is because the cellphone is off or the call could be missed for other reasons. For example, the phone is switched off while in transit; the SASSL rep in charge of the phone is required to turn the phone off when commuting.
 - SASSL maintains statistics on calls
 - **ACTION:** S. Chatha to follow up with the collective about sharing statistics with the Working Group to review for resource management.
 - When the Ontario government came up with their action plan, they said that the province does not intent to fund sexual assault crisis support lines. Among the Canadian universities that have crisis lines, SASSL is the only one that runs 24/7.
 - **Q:** At the next Ontario Universities meeting, is it possible to bring this up as an item for discussion?
- A number of students are unaware of SASSL's existence on campus.
- Q:** How does SASSL promote itself as a service?
 - SASSL has a Small Events Coordinator and Large Events Coordinator who promote SASSL through workshops and other events. The Publicity and Promotions Coordinator promotes SASSL through social media. The Internal Outreach Coordinator does presentations.

- SASSL tables and runs poster campaigns.
 - This has been an issue because they are often taken down by the CSBO crew.
 - **ACTION:** SASSL would like to speak to York about not having SASSL posters taken down.
- The University promotes SASSL in its resource and through its safety app.
 - York University also sends students an email at the beginning of the school year with all the safety resources available for students.
- A lot of Graduate Students are unaware of SASSL's existence or think that it is a service for undergraduates. M. Rajabi Paak suggested that SASSL should send delegates to talk to graduate students during orientation.
 - **ACTION:** S. Chatha will follow up on this.
- On survivor support: student organizations are more flexible (in terms of hours and availability) than University offices.

Discussion around the All Day Session

- The idea of having an All Day Session is to have a thoughtful and productive conversation about some key topics. VPFA has been identifying a few topics that require further discussion.
 - Expectations of services and resources on campus.
 - Confidentiality structures for the different service groups.
 - Integrated feedback options for the different services on campus.

Meeting Schedule

- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 8th at 12:00 p.m.