Exploring Strategies to Support Mainstream and Anabaptist Rural Women Experiencing Domestic Violence: A Research Process from Literature to Implementation

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OptimismPlace
WOMEN'S SHELTER AND SUPPORT SERVICES
Offering Protection, Prevention and Possibilities

STOP V.A.W.
Stop Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee of Perth County

IDENTIFIED PROBLEM

Following the completion of a needs assessment that indicated an increased need and lack of accessibility of domestic violence services in North Perth, Optimism Place Women's Shelter and Support Services implemented an outreach office in Listowel. Although this office allows outreach workers to support women and children, numerous challenges exist that prevent women from seeking these supports:

- Isolation
- Lack of predictable, consistent resources
- Lack of privacy and anonymity
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of affordable housing solutions
- Distance from services
- Farm life (i.e. financial dependence, increased stress)
- Increased weapon presence
- Traditional gender roles
- Slow police response
- Anabaptist traditions and community dynamics

The Rural Realities Grant has allowed for the research and community development required to find innovative ways to better support rural woman and children within their home community.

Ontario
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY and SOCIAL SERVICES
VAW Rural Realities Fund

RESEARCH PROCESS

1. Research innovative rural service models and best practices
   - Academic, peer-reviewed, published literature
   - Models implemented in comparable communities
2. Consultation and determination of service delivery models applicable to North Perth
   - North Perth service providers
   - North Perth service users
3. Implementation and monitoring
4. Formal evaluation

MODELS PUBLISHED IN LITERATURE

Model	Description
Network-Oriented Approach	Focus on assisting isolated survivors engage in informal support networks; Engaging with family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, church members, etc. to assist her in developing a network for crisis and support
Safe Houses	Local families open up their homes to house survivors; Often used as emergency accommodation until woman can be transported to a shelter
DOVE Intervention	Domestic violence support workers attend the home during pregnancy and postpartum nurse visits; Goal is to re-sensitize survivor to abuse being experienced while acknowledging her commitment to her children
Local Library Collaboration	Provide local librarians with domestic violence training, develop a specialized book section, promote computers as a safe way to find resources without being tracked, etc.
Videoconferencing Technology	Use Polycom technology to connect service providers to rural, isolated survivors through safe computers installed in rural crisis centres
MOSAIC Program	Encourage screening in primary healthcare settings to identify women at risk; If meet criteria, engage in 12 months of weekly home visits from trained, supervised local mothers in a peer-support role

Although the challenges experienced by individuals impacted by domestic violence in rural areas are well illustrated in published literature, models, strategies, and solutions to overcome these rural barriers have been given relatively little attention. Research focused on traditional Anabaptist groups is very limited, and often absent, due to the nature of their core traditions and beliefs.

IMPLEMENTED MODELS IN COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES

Predictable, consistent rural outreach offices staffed by full-time rural support workers.

The Newcomers Group, originally an ESL group for Low German Speaking Mennonite individuals, with service provider guest presentations.

Formal abuse response protocol developed in collaboration with local Anabaptist church elders.

Local rural safe space housing for women and children requiring shelter.

The Creating Change Treatment Program and the Working Together Program targeting male offenders and domestic violence in the workplace in rural Alberta.

iCarol, a text-support program for shelters.

Improving Shelter Services, a program designed to remove reasons women return to their partner.

Rural organizations are trained in the Peer Support Program to facilitate support groups in their local communities.
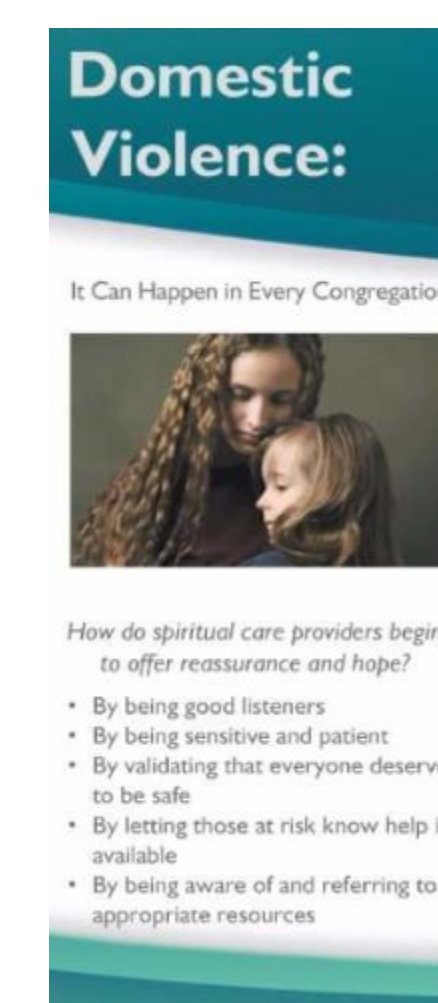
SERVICE PROVIDER CONSULTATION & COLLABORATION

Perth District Health Unit · North Perth Public Library · Perth Care for Kids · CASE @ LDSS · MCC · Countryside Midwifery Services · The Centre for Employment and Learning · Choices for Change · Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society · O.P.P. · North Perth Family Health Team · Ontario MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY & CORRECTIONAL SERVICES Probation and Parole · North Perth and Area Ministerial Association · Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance · Huron-Perth

COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

When rural women are not talking to formal domestic violence services, they are talking to someone. This is often a trusted member of the community such as teachers, pastors, nurses, librarians, co-workers, hairstylists, etc. How can we reach that trusted community member, collaborate in our service delivery, and ensure women are receiving a supportive, safe, informed response? In collaboration with both formal and informal North Perth service providers, various strategies have been implemented.

North Perth Resource Centre for Women
24-Hour Phone: 519-271-5550
24-Hour Toll-Free: 1-800-265-8598
www.optimismplace.com
OptimismPlace

Domestic Violence: It Can Happen in Every Congregation

Make It Our Business
We all have a role to play in addressing Workplace Domestic Violence

Cut it Out
Salons Against Domestic Abuse

SERVICE USER CONSULTATION & PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

Qualitative research methods were utilized for participant recruitment and data collection. Through **purposive sampling** techniques, a **homogenous sample** was gathered. All participants are women that have experienced abuse within the North Perth area. **Key informant interviews** were selected as the method of data collection due to the sensitive topic being discussed and narrow **sampling frame**, leading to a lack of anonymity. **Semi-structured interviews** occurred in a one-on-one, confidential, safe environment that was selected by the participant.
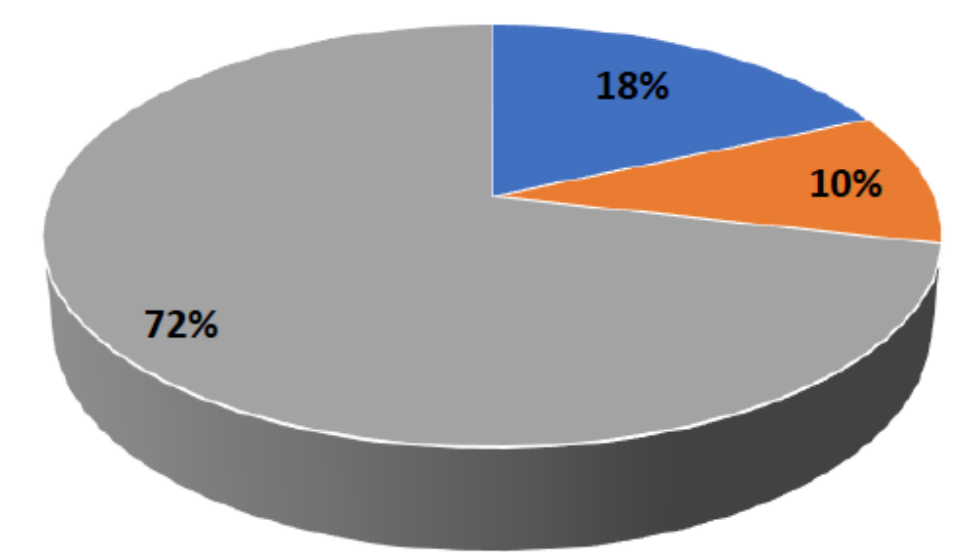
To recruit key informants:
- Past and present clients of Optimism Place
- Contact with collaborative service providers
- Approximately 90 posters displayed in and around North Perth
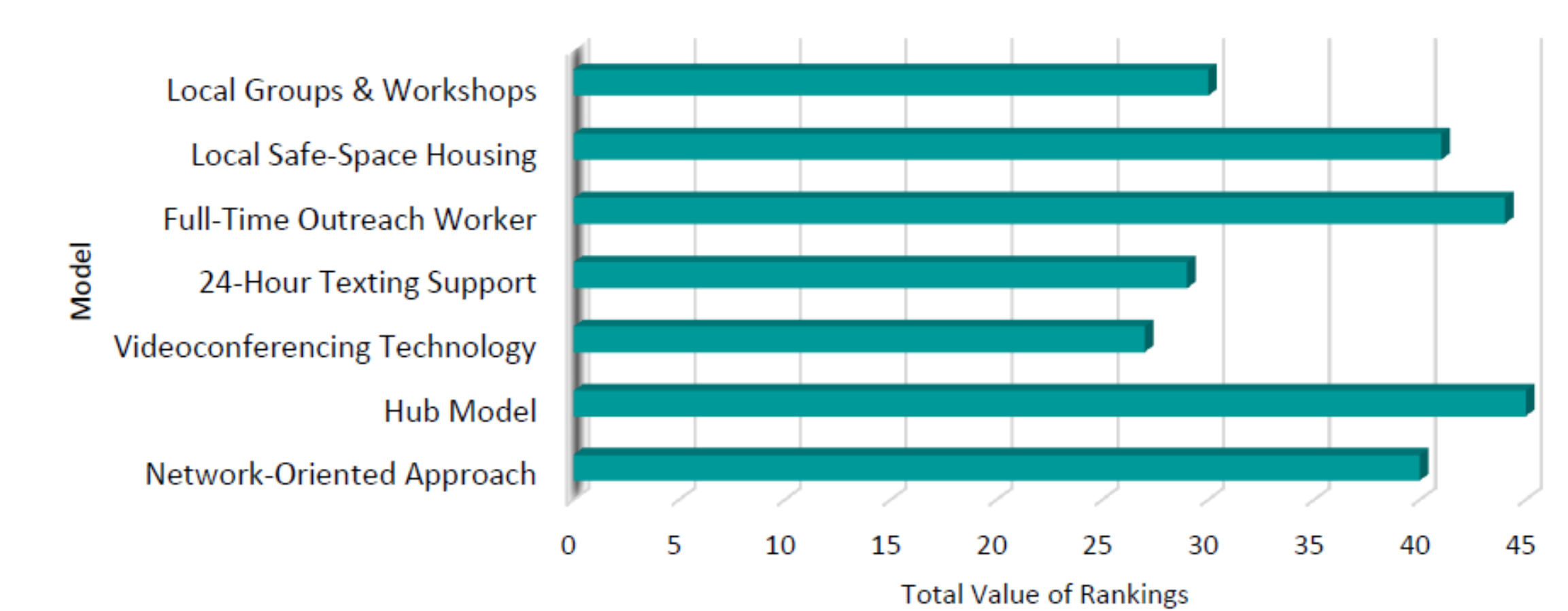- Social media page developed and shared by local service providers

Themes:
- All women had exited the relationship
- Few services were accessed prior to leaving the relationship
- Professional women had experienced additional barriers when accessing services
- Mixed outcomes regarding the benefits and challenges of experiencing abuse in a rural community

Time of Service Access

18% Before Separation
10% During Separation
72% After Separation

Effective Models of Service Delivery for North Perth

Local Groups & Workshops
Local Safe-Space Housing
Full-Time Outreach Worker
24-Hour Texting Support
Videoconferencing Technology
Hub Model
Network-Oriented Approach

(x-axis: Total Value of Rankings — 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45; y-axis: Model)

"[Being in an urban city] is absolutely different because you have that anonymity … [in a rural community] there's still that stigma, everyone knows everything"

"I felt like everybody in [the organization] knew my situation, was always thinking about me … everybody was really invested because it is small, I wasn't a number, I was a person … does that happen in urban settings where you have bigger organizations?"

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