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**ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETY OF TORONTO**

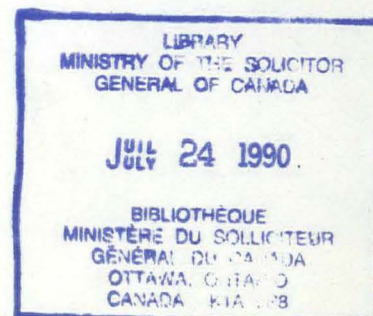
STREETWORK OUTREACH WITH  
ADULT FEMALE STREET PROSTITUTES

FINAL REPORT: MAY, 1987

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PROJECT SUPERVISOR: BILLEE LASKIN

PROJECT FUNDED BY:



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In May, 1986, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto initiated a project to collect data on the social service needs of female street prostitutes 19 years of age and over, and to provide direct service as necessary and appropriate, in order to develop a program proposal for ongoing services and service delivery. The project has been of 12 months duration, funded by the Ministry of the Solicitor General under the Women in Conflict with the Law program.

## 2. THE PROBLEM

With each particular view of the problem of prostitution, comes a concomitant proposed solution. For some, the concern is neighbourhood quality of life - harassment, noise, loitering, swearing, fighting and traffic congestion; for some the concern is for the prostitute herself and how she is affected by the danger, violence, disease, drugs and pimps; for some it is a moral objection to quick, anonymous sex bought and sold between strangers. Proposed solutions from these various perspectives include licensing, legalization, decriminalization, charging customers, strengthening federal legislation, introducing municipal by-laws, red-light districts, safe houses, increased policing and expanded social services.

While prostitution per se is not illegal in Canada, most activities related to prostitution are criminal offences under section 195.1 of the Criminal Code. Prior to 1978, this section of the law seemed to curb the practice of street prostitution sufficiently to meet the tolerance level of the Canadian public. However, after the Hutt decision, requiring that soliciting be proven to be "pressing and persistent" in order for conviction, the ability of the criminal justice system to impact on street prostitution was severely diminished. In major cities across Canada, as the practice of street prostitution and its side effects became more obvious, the issue became a topic of heated debate. In cities such as Calgary, Vancouver, Montreal and Niagara Falls, strong public reaction led to the enactment of municipal by-laws aimed at keeping prostitutes off the streets. These municipal laws were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada in January, 1983 because they infringed upon a matter under federal jurisdiction. Pressure on the federal government led to the creation of the Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution.

The Fraser Report, released in April, 1985 shared the following results of its research. Prostitution is overwhelmingly a female adult occupation and most street prostitutes are in the 18-24 age group. Women in their 20's and 30's are relegated to less desirable work areas and work harder for less money; 20-25% of female prostitutes are or have been married and have children to care for; the majority of prostitutes have a criminal record and use alcohol and drugs as part of their lifestyle; street prostitutes have low levels of education and cite economic causes as the reason they are on the street. The net income of female street prostitutes is estimated at \$12,000 - \$15,000 per year.

Despite the progressive proposals of the Fraser Report, Bill C-49 was passed into legislation in December, 1985, in response to the vocal concerns of some neighbourhood residents. While social service resources were being directed at assisting juvenile prosti-



tutes, adult female street prostitutes came under yet harsher social reaction and legal sanction.

Thus, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto undertook a project with adult female street prostitutes to determine their social service needs in order to develop a multi-faceted program of services which would begin to fill the gap in services to this target group. Because of the uniqueness of the lifestyle of prostitution, there is little doubt that the needs of this group will in some ways be similar to and in others differ from the needs of other women who have been in conflict with the law. Intervention with this group of women has historically been quite limited by traditional social services. With this in mind the approach adopted to meet the goals of the project was of asking the target group about the services they needed and appropriate methods of service delivery, and of providing direct service as deemed necessary and appropriate. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto appeared to be the appropriate agency to respond to this need. It is the only service agency in this city with a particular mandate to provide programs and services for and about women in conflict with the law and as such, has experience working with adult female prostitutes. As well, the agency has been concerned and involved with the issue of prostitution since 1964, primarily in an advocacy role with respect to the legislation. (See Prostitution Information Sheet, March 1987). It was felt the time had come to increase direct service to adult street prostitutes and that to do so, it was important to find out from the women, what their needs are.

### 3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A) To determine the social service needs of adult female street prostitutes in Toronto through streetwork outreach. The purpose of the streetwork outreach approach is to establish and develop relationships with working adult female street prostitutes, to determine from them their service needs and effective methods of service delivery. The streetworkers have attempted to discover from the women what their needs are and have assessed from their own experiences what the needs appear to be with respect to both the women who are continuing in their lifestyle and those who wish to change their lifestyle. The streetworkers aimed at establishing contact with at least 80 adult female street prostitutes over a nine month period. Project staff also interviewed relevant Elizabeth Fry agency staff and other key sources of information about service needs and delivery options.

B) To provide direct service to adult female street prostitutes beginning with street-worker contact.

The two streetworkers attempted to provide direct service as appropriate to women with whom they made contact, in the form of crisis intervention and referrals to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto and other relevant social services. The kind of services requested and the various methods of service delivery (i.e.: direct personal services versus referral) and the types of clients were monitored in order to identify the needs and preferred methods of service delivery to develop a long term model of service delivery. Staff monitored the number of clients requesting service - of what kind and in which way. To the extent that follow-up was possible, the effectiveness of services provided and the



way in which services were offered were monitored by workers. Clients' perceptions were also monitored to determine whether the type of service(s) provided and method of delivery was helpful in the woman achieving her stated and/or perceived goal(s).

C) To develop a multi-faceted program of services and service delivery to female street prostitutes based on the study of the stated needs of the target group and the workers' direct experience perceiving and responding to the needs.

The final three month period involved the workers tabulating the data gained through their discussions and experiences with adult female street prostitutes.

#### 4. TARGET GROUP

The target group was adult female street prostitutes over 19. (Service was already being provided to juvenile prostitutes in Toronto through youth-oriented service agencies). The target group is quite readily identifiable on the street as they are working. The general area covered included Bloor Street (north), Lake Ontario (south), Parliament Street (east) and Dufferin Street (west).

As Bill C-49 was passed in December, 1985 this impacted significantly on the lives of women earning their living through prostitution, as will be discussed in the report. Women were forced to move around areas of the city and from city to city. The street workers therefore were continuously checking out different areas of the city as well as developing contact with women who were often seen only once before moving elsewhere.

#### 5. LOCATION OF THE PROGRAM

The two streetworkers worked out of the office of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto, 215 Wellesley Street East, Toronto, (924-3708).

#### 6. PROCESS

To facilitate the project, two streetworkers/researchers were hired for a one year contract. Amber Cooke was hired May 20, 1986 and Toni Thomas on August 5, 1986. The streetworkers collected data and provided supportive counselling, crisis intervention and referrals for nine months. They focussed the final three months on analyzing the data and developing a multi-faceted program designed to meet the social service needs of and appropriate methods of delivery of service to adult female street prostitutes.

#### 7. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on:

A) Input from adult female street prostitutes as to their service needs (both within and as an alternative to prostitution and as a means of livelihood and a lifestyle), and the types of service delivery required.



B) Feedback from the target group on the effectiveness of services and the types of service delivery offered by the streetworkers.

C) Perceptions of the streetworkers based on experience interacting with the target group as to the needs, type of service needed and type of service delivery required by the target group.

D) Perception of the streetworkers based on experience interacting with the target group on effectiveness of services and types of service delivery offered in assisting the target group to meet stated and perceived needs.

E) Factual data on types of client's needs, requested and utilized services, requested and utilized service delivery outcome.

F) Input from informed others as to needs, type of services needed, and types of service delivery most appropriate.

Adult female prostitutes on the street generally do not voluntarily access existing social services. This is often because of their past experiences with services which appear to lack understanding of their needs and judge their lifestyle. Prostitutes also fear dealing with institutions or organizations within the established social network, that they will be harassed by the authorities after such contact. This further inhibits their use of social services.

The prostitutes have fears and valid concerns which work to keep them isolated and marginalized for their own protection against stigmatization, discrimination, criminalization and further exploitation. It was therefore essential that the streetworkers liaised with the women on their own territory in a way which was non-threatening and non-judgmental in approach, utilizing a consistent and effective style in which trust could be developed and nurtured.

Streetwork involves being on the streets, watching the identified target group, approaching individuals and identifying oneself and one's purpose. It is of paramount importance that a streetworker meeting women on the streets have specific skills, enabling the worker and the prostitute to develop an open rapport. It does not involve taking sides with the police, the women or the community, but only providing assistance when requested within the parameters of the law.

The approach used in relation to the adult female street prostitutes while they are working is geared to their changing situation with respect to their working hours. The various districts vary in potential danger for the prostitute herself, their customers and the streetworker. The streetworker must be aware of the danger from pimps, police and customers and approach each situation accordingly. Constant assessment of the risk factor for the prostitute to exchange information with the streetworker is essential. The street prostitute at work on the street is at higher risk when talking to others than her colleagues who engage in prostitution with the protection of an escort service or as a call-girl.



The initial steps taken in this project involved networking with select existing social service agencies. The staff educated themselves with regard to those services which were appropriate and available to the women and established relationships with them. This enabled the streetworker to obtain the perception of the service providers on needs and service delivery and to make referrals for physical health and emotional concerns, housing and legal issues. Thus the project was made known to the community at large.

Groups and organizations involved in networking were:

- A) Street Outreach Services - working with juvenile prostitutes up to age 19;
- B) A.I.D.S. Committee of Toronto;
- C) Public Health Department;
- D) Inner City Youth Program;
- E) Beat the Street;
- F) Hostels, i.e. Covenant House;
- G) Y.W.C.A.;
- H) Central Toronto Youth Services;
- I) Manpower;
- J) Doctors;
- K) Hassle Free Women's Clinic;
- L) Women's College Hospital;
- M) NOW Magazine - a Toronto community paper;
- N) EMMA Productions - a feminist video company;
- O) Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (C.O.R.E.);
- P) C.O.Y.O.T.E.;
- Q) The Citizen's Advisory Bureau;
- R) Women Against Violence Against Women;
- S) Broadside - a Toronto feminist paper;
- T) Lawyers;
- U) Various bars in Toronto which employ strippers.

On the street training assistance was given by Street Outreach Services, for which the project is deeply grateful. Project streetworkers accompanied S.O.S. streetworkers on their shifts on the street, learning their methods of establishing contact with juvenile prostitutes.

The streetworkers accessed adult female street prostitutes "on their own turf" throughout the city. The areas known as the "Tracks", where street prostitution by adult females are now primarily located in Toronto are Parkdale (University Avenue to Dufferin Street on Queen Street West), Lakeshore Boulevard (a small strip of motels on Lakeshore Boulevard) and downtown Toronto (Yonge Street to Parliament Street down to Queen Street East and the encompassing areas). The street workers walked the tracks and approached women working visibly on the streetcorners and various other locations during both daytime, evening and night time hours. This contact then led them to donut shops, coffee houses, strip clubs and motels where the streetworkers were able to access more of a cross-section of women.



The approach was to offer a cigarette while introducing themselves, the agency and the purpose of the project. In other cases, an invitation was extended to have coffee in a nearby restaurant. E. Fry cards, medical clinic and lawyers' numbers were handed out. The streetworkers talked about safety, including safe sex practices. Condoms were made available. They encouraged women to call Elizabeth fry if they needed emergency help. The streetworkers could also be contacted by the agency via a beeper, if necessary. This accessibility facilitated the development of a trusting relationship. Service could be provided when women were in crisis. Referrals could be made to women when they most needed them.

The women would leave messages with one another, to be passed on to the streetworkers to ask about housing, lawyers and about the welfare of other women who had been arrested.

At the beginning of the project, the streetworkers' appearance on the street was questioned. They saw fear and mistrust in the women's eyes; some thought the streetworkers were undercover police, others thought they were from one of the many religious organizations who approach the prostitutes and pray for them. But as the workers consistently met the women with respect, courtesy and genuine interest, offering cigarettes, condoms and information, the women relaxed and began to respond. They began to share about their lives and their needs.

Some of the women came to be seen frequently and a first name basis was established, with continued birth control and safe sex information given, as well as information on social services, referrals to lawyers and offers to accompany the women to court and discuss specific problems or issues. Hassle Free Clinic was most co-operative in providing condoms to promote safe sex practices. The S.O.S. program accepted referrals of women who were under 19 and thus not in the target group, and S.O.S. in turn referred women over 19 to the project.

## 8. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The streetworkers found an average of 20 hours a week of street work was appropriate. The 35 hour work week was divided amongst activities/responsibilities which were seen as relevant to meeting goals of the project. Shifts were approximately 6 hours long. Generally, shifts were from 1:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., beginning earlier or extending later depending upon the changing working hours of the women and the occurrence of crises. The daytime hours were less tension-ridden. The prostitutes can afford more lengthy conversation than is the case in the nighttime hours. At the same time there were more women to contact in the busier nighttime hours. The staff worked Monday to Friday, but not on Saturdays or Sundays, because social work backup from the agency in case of emergencies was most available during week days. The streetworkers called in to the agency when they went out on each shift and when the shift ended. Agency staff were instructed to contact Metro Police if the workers did not call in at the pre-arranged times, giving their approximate location.

Approximately 10 hours per week was used for discussions with relevant community



sources, court accompaniment of the women and initially self defense lessons, for meetings with the project supervisor, and public forums on prostitution.

Approximately 5 hours per week was allocated to administrative tasks such as data compilation.

The scheduling was flexible to meet the needs of the women (including crises) and the two staff.

## 9. AGENCY SUPPORT

Support provided by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto through the W.I.C.W.T.L. Grant, included weekly meetings with the supervisor, beepers, Metro passes, administrative support, self-defence training, money for coffee with the women and the backup system which involved having a social work staff of the agency on call while the street-worker was on shift.

## 10. FINDINGS

### A. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

The interaction between female street prostitutes and the mainstream community involves a spectrum of conflict of interest.

For example, on October 10, 1986 in the courtroom hearing the case of Jennifer Smith, a prostitute challenging Section 195.1 of the Criminal Code as unconstitutional, residents and business people who testified shared a desire to rid their place of business or residence from noise, littering, defacing, pimps, customers and harassment. They perceived the prostitute, not as an individual woman, but as the problem to be dealt with. They perceived prostitution as a problem because of the prostitute.

Women shared with the streetworkers their resultant feeling of alienation from the community. When reporting rapes or abuse or when needing the police, they often received responses that "they deserved what they got." Prostitutes working in escort services who interact less visibly with the community found less difficulty with the lack of community support, because they need it less and are less identifiable as prostitutes.

On the other hand, some community agencies were most supportive. Hassle Free Clinic provided contraceptives for distribution and were most open to accepting referrals of prostitutes for medical issues such as pregnancy, abortions, STD or AIDS testing, etc., as well as general health care needs. Women's College Hospital was spoken of in a positive manner. Generally, community agencies which were most supportive were those which worked with street youth or provided shelter to transient women e.g. S.O.S., hostels.

The women experienced critical and judgemental responses from many mainstream social services. Many people feel judgemental about the work that prostitutes do. These



attitudes are projected into the ways in which the services are extended. For example, the reticence of prostitutes to request service from C.A.S. for assistance with the further development of parenting skills stems from the spoken or unspoken attitude of service providers. Women stated that service providers assume that because they earn their living through prostitution, they can not possibly be good parents or even care about their children. Service providers give the message that what prostitutes do (sell sex) is wrong, immoral or dirty and seen as willfully putting the child in danger. Service providers, given their perspective of prostitutes, give the message that this work must stop before the true development of parenting skills can occur. Consequently, the prostitute fears the service provider, on the basis of their perspective, could remove the children from her care.

This critical response is also experienced throughout the medical services, both with personnel in hospitals and with doctors in private practice. For example, women state that when they seek treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, irrespective of the many safe sex practices they do use, they felt or were told they had brought this on themselves. Rather than endure this perspective of judgement and blame as part of treatment, they avoid seeking medical assistance.

These attitudes, while not always conveyed directly, are experienced as judgemental and rejecting. While the women may not actually be refused treatment, the service is so laden with blame, disgust and criticism without any acceptance or understanding of them as individuals or their lives, it is experienced as rejecting - ultimately leading to the non-use of traditional services.

## B. THE CUSTOMERS

Prostitutes described their "tricks" or "dates" as men looking for fantasy outside of marriage, or anonymous sex, needing to fulfill sexual needs or just wanting companionship. They reported seeing men from all professions - lawyers, judges, police, professors as well as cab drivers, salesmen, athletes, plumbers, club owners, - a cross cultural and economic sampling of the male population. Some women occasionally met contacts who expressed offers of alternative career opportunities, such as hostesses in restaurants or lounges or receptionists in their company. Rarely were these offers followed through. Generally they served to keep the prostitute dependant upon the customer, meeting his needs, in the hope that this promise would be actualized. Some women established primary or exclusive relationships with one customer (a "sugar daddy") who supported her, in exchange for sexual services and/or emotional companionship at his demand. Further, some women established a regular working relationship with individual men, thereby developing a regular clientele, while others rarely provided service to any man more than once.

The women indicated that the response of the men who use their services was varied. While some men were caring and respectful, others were abusive and aggressive.



### C. ADULT FEMALE STREET PROSTITUTES

The street workers made contact with 243 women, far exceeding the projected study base of 80 women. These women came from many parts of Canada and the United States. They moved frequently from city to city to meet their survival needs and to various tracks in the city. Their movement was increased significantly during the past year due to the impact of Bill C-49 and their consequent heightened vulnerability.

The world of street prostitution is a subculture consisting of values, a code of ethics and a sociology all its own. However, this group of women have many commonalities with other marginalized women, such as needs for:

- increased self-esteem, self-awareness and confidence;
- career and life planning, exploring employment and general lifestyle alternatives;
- education, to build other economic options;
- increased awareness of community resources including:
  - a) housing - long-term and emergency shelter
  - b) assistance regarding parenting skills
  - c) medical services
  - d) the welfare system in general including family benefits
  - e) addictions services
  - f) individual therapy
  - g) family counselling
  - h) support groups
  - i) legal information
  - j) financial management

There seems to be no "typical" adult female street prostitute. Each woman has an individual background and individual pre-conditions to her involvement in prostitution.

However - grade 10 appeared to be the average grade completed by the target group; - approximately 41% of the group contacted were raised outside of the nuclear family; - the majority of women left their home at a young age, to escape neglect or abuse; - the majority of women do not earn more through their work as a prostitute than they would through other forms of employment, but they are unable or unwilling to choose other employment.

A primary vulnerability that all street prostitutes shared and that some would acknowledge, is the fear of being raped, beaten, killed, stabbed, robbed and getting into a car with a "trick" and not coming back.

Others were concerned about becoming addicted to drugs while trying to cope with these fears. Some were fearful of husbands, boyfriends, or family members discovering their work as prostitutes. When they had allowed themselves to express their situation and needs, many had been met in the past with abusive, judgemental and unsatisfying results. Hence they tended to remain secretive and disconnected from family or friends who were not a part of the street culture or lifestyle.



Similarly, they had been met with a lack of acceptance, validation and openness from social service providers and hence felt alienated from social services. These experiences have led the women contacted in the project, to be mistrusting and isolated from the larger world while working in prostitution. Thus, they were unable to receive the assistance or support for their difficulties which is available to others experiencing similar difficulties, such as drug or alcohol dependence.

On the other hand, the women share a feeling of acceptance in the subculture of street prostitution. Sexual interaction becomes a familiar transaction. The money gives them some sense of value, and some expressed feeling power in their relationship with the "john" (unless he becomes violent).

For many, physical, sexual and emotional abuse and violence is only a continuation of a continuum of previous life experiences as victims of violence, prior to engaging in prostitution as a means of earning a living. For many sex is a commodity the woman has had taken unwillingly from her, since early in her life. She thus feels it is the only commodity she has to offer, and is familiar with the sexual transaction. She feels she is better off actually receiving money in return, when she believes sex will anyway continue to be taken from her by men in her life.

But generally, the women often feel undermined by their work as prostitutes and devalued by the customers and society by the form of their work. Their need to remain closed about themselves emanates from the weight of a pain of non-acceptance. They feel hurt that they are perceived as "less than human" by society, the customer or their own families.

Some women manifest the feeling of hurt, fear, isolation and non-acceptance through various forms of destructive and compulsive behaviour. Some were aware of the pre-conditions to their behaviour; many were not. Drug and alcohol addiction, eating disorders, credit card fraud, theft and "danger junkies" (those who become addicted to the tension and adrenalin rush of being in a situation/context of constant danger) are behaviours often found among prostitutes. The women tend to feel guilty and responsible. Isolated and discouraged they come to feel overwhelmed and helpless and so continue the behaviours for comfort and to cope with their reality.

Street prostitutes are in a business of anonymity. Their survival is based largely on avoiding intimacy, both in terms of their individual interactions with customers and the wider society. They are prepared to share facts about their instrumental needs such as housing and finances but are far more reluctant to discuss their personal backgrounds, relationships or feelings.

A woman's level of openness with the streetworkers depends on a combination of factors: the timing, what is happening in her immediate life and how needy she is on a particular day, her personal life experiences and prior contact with the streetworkers.

Women discussed their dismay with the poor sanitary conditions in gas stations, donut shops, hotels and other local public facilities, which they must use for their personal



hygienic needs when they are working on the street. In some instances, there are no washrooms to be found at all, which significantly affects their working conditions. Some women were fearful for and of younger, less experienced women. They were afraid of the competition by younger women, but fearful for their safety. They were afraid of careless, uninformed "tricks", and prostitutes passing AIDS and other serious sexually transmitted diseases to themselves and others in the community by not practicing safe sex. Further, some customers offer more money for sex without a condom. Lack of information or economic desperation can lead to some women not using condoms.

The women openly shared their reactions to various brands of condoms on the market. They openly monitor the quality levels of condoms. Some condoms cause yeast and other irritating vaginal discomfort.

Some women felt the need to work alone, establishing a working territory from a motel room, or in front of a donut shop, or near a phone booth, having a place to retreat to from rain or snow or harassing by-passers. Most women found it safer to work in groups or pairs. This cooperative working situation, however, was radically affected by Bill C-49. In the past, they could look out for each other, scrutinize new "tricks" and communicate messages. With the removal of the 'pressing and persistent' pre-requisite of the law, their freedom to speech and association was limited. Thus, their freedom to care for each other in these ways was removed. It was assumed if they were hanging out in groups that they were talking about "money" and "tricks". If they were known to the police and seen in groups it was believed they were conspiring to commit a crime, ie: soliciting. The goal and result of Bill C-49 is to isolate the women by breaking down these groups and preventing them from communicating while at work.

Some women with children practiced time sharing, switching shifts and providing care for each other's children.

All women shared the dislike and fear of working in "tricks" cars. Generally this meant working in cramped and dirty conditions often locked in the car alone with the customers. Women spoke of feeling trapped and isolated in this unsafe working situation where the control is tipped toward the customer.

Some women spoke of pimps approaching them in a harassing and insistent manner to bring them in to work in their "stable". Pimps would threaten to make it difficult for an independent woman to work the streets if she didn't follow his advice. The degree to which these threats were followed through is varied.

The length of time women had been working in prostitution varied. Of the women aged 19-21 there was a significant group who had been off and on the street, working since 15-16 (not ignoring the existence of those who began even earlier), and another significant group who had been working in prostitution for 6 months to 1 year. A few were college or university students supplementing their income or women who had experienced an unexpected crisis and needed funds to meet the demands of the crisis situation. The greatest majority however had left home and had come to the streets earning their living solely in this manner. Some stated they had chosen prostitution as an



exciting lifestyle, involving travel to several cities and they felt a sense of control and power supporting themselves. Others felt they had little choice to support a child or a drug addiction, given their other skills or psycho-social state.

The age group 22-25 did not contrast to any degree from the above grouping. It did, however, include women who had never had other employment, who had lost previous jobs or who had never found a job they found satisfied enough to keep. Some worked only a few hours to supplement other sources of income. Once again, some of the women at this point had been working on the street for seven to nine years while others had been working three to four or one to two years.

The 26-29 age group comprised women who had predominately been working as prostitutes for at least two years and usually much longer. Despite the data from the Fraser Report which indicates that 20-25% were supporting children, the experience of the streetworkers was that approximately 70% of the women were supporting children. Some spoke about saving money to change their lifestyle. The intensity, stress and harshness of working in prostitution had accumulated and was taking its toll. They worked harder, for less money and as street prostitutes at this age, had less desirable clients.

Many of the women aged 30-33 and older, generally had little hope of changing their lifestyle. The majority had been working five years or more. As they got older, the income decreased, the risks and discomfort increased. Some hoped they would meet someone to help them out of the lifestyle, while they found in the colleagues of the street a sense of comfort from loneliness. Fear of the future and of no other options increased significantly in this group. Other employment options pursued by these women at this point in their lives generally involved service jobs ie: janitorial. In the marketplace of streetwork prostitution, the customers are looking for youthfulness and willingness to comply. The most lucrative period for a woman earning her living in street prostitution is when her skills and understanding of the street are the greatest and she is still young and energetic. This is generally in her early to mid 20s. The turn occurs when the multitude of abusive experiences including being "ripped off", combined with getting older result in it becoming more difficult to sustain living in the harsh conditions of street life.

When asked "what are the major difficulties experienced in earning your living by means of street prostitution," the adult female street prostitute responded:

Fear - of customers, pimps, police, C.A.S. (losing their children), family discovering what they do, imprisonment, of sporadic income, or having no money at all.

Despair - feeling helpless and out of control; controlled by drugs or alcohol and needing money to supply their addictions; being separated from children and family; alienation from society; feeling they had no options and no self-respect - including their reaction to sexual relations with men they don't like; feeling lonely and isolated; having no motivation; a history of negative relationships.

Pain - violence from pimps, customers, police, judgemental attitudes of family, land-



lords, social services and people that jeer and shout at them; long working hours, no toilets, cold weather.

Stigmatization, Discrimination and Alienation - feeling judged for how they earn their living thereby impacting upon their openness to interacting with mainstream society, including individuals, services and other potential employment options.

Approximatley 90% of the women contacted indicated they wished to stop working on the streets at some point, but felt unable or unclear about how to even begin this process. Women wanting to leave prostitution shared feelings of fear of rejection from the "straight" world. Just as there is a street culture which involves an array of codes and styles of communication, dress and behaviour, so too is there a straight culture which many of the women felt unequipped and unable to understand or feel comfortable in. They did not know if alternate employment was therefore possible for them, practically and emotionally.

#### D. WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER WOMEN WORKING IN PROSTITUTION

There is no "typical prostitute;" each woman's psycho-socio-economic background, life experience, and present status is unique. The relationships women share with other women earning their living through prostitution are as varied as the women themselves. However, the women have issues and experiences in common and share the problems and realities inherent in the business of street prostitution.

The average income for a street prostitute being from \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year, often necessitates women sharing housing expenses with other prostitutes, both male and female. Often these shared accommodations are overcrowded and chaotic, feeding into volatile situations.

The danger and violence of street prostitution can pit the women against one another in competition for "tricks" or pimps. At the same time, on the street, some women create a working environment that can provide safety. This may involve gathering in groups, to shield each other from rotten fruit being thrown by passersby or from balconies, to support each other as people jeer at them and shout insults and to protect each other from people beating them up and taking their money. They also enhance their safety on the street by taking down licence plate numbers of "tricks" as co-workers go with them in cars. If a woman does not return within a reasonable time, they will follow up by contacting 911, the babysitter and/or friend or lover.

The women not working for a pimp, choose amongst themselves "safeties" who will scrutinize "dates" and remove younger, more reckless prostitutes from their territory on the street. The "safety" can also act as conveyor of messages, look out for police and determine who is trustworthy to talk to, or provide a place to stay.

The women shared how they establish this protective framework to care for one another in the street environment, where extending responsibility for one another can en-



hance their only means to economic survival without threatening their business.

As noted above, these safety networks have been affected by Bill C-49, wherein they must temper their visibility, thereby diminishing the protection they are able to create and provide for/with each other.

#### E. WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

The streetworkers found women who worked for coercive pimps to be the most difficult to access. For some, they feared betrayal of their mate, others feared beatings. Some women talked about how good they felt when they met their pimp, who accepted her, cared for her, treated her well. Some women spoke about their first sense of belonging, being experience in the street culture. Others talked of the abuse and violence they experienced at the hands of their pimps and about needing safe houses.

Some women felt the need to talk about fictitious husbands, pimps or boyfriends to be accepted on the street. Other women talked about sharing their form of livelihood with their partner who also worked as a prostitute.

Women who were single, divorced or separated shared feelings of having relationships with special "dates". They could explore and experience different levels of relating without the responsibility of dealing with commitment or feelings of inadequacy.

Some women request assistance from taxi drivers for transportation in emergencies, or when they have insufficient money to pay for the ride. The women need confidentiality from the taxicab driver, to not divulge to their pimp or others where they went. There is a barter system in place on the street, where assistance is provided in exchange for cash, free service from the prostitute or other goods.

Some women stated they hoped to find their "salvation" in someone, whether it be pimp, customer or friend, who would come to love them and take care of them so they wouldn't have to continue working and coping with the harsh realities of their lives. This person would solve the problem they felt powerless to change themselves, just as most people feel at times overwhelmed and needing others to support them.

Those women involved in a relationship with a partner who is aware of their involvement in prostitution, spoke of difficulties associated with her being the breadwinner. Some of these relationships experience significant struggle, emotional turmoil and violence. Women often indicated that despite the difficulties in their personal relationships, they were not prepared to give up their source of income. It afforded them a degree of security and independence that was too important to relinquish for dependency on a partner who may be abusive and aggressive.

The ways in which the women referred to their relationships varied and the permutations of these relationships varied within this sub-population as with any other. Some women saw the man they were involved with as their boyfriend even though he had a number of girlfriends; others saw him as their pimp. Some women viewed the man they



were involved with as their pimp even though they were partners and he referred to her as his girlfriend. The socio-political complexity of this issue is discussed in the following section.

#### F. PIMPING AND PROSTITUTION

The streetworkers perceived a range of dynamics existing between the women and the partners in their lives. Some of the women did have pimps controlling their activities who viewed them as their property. When they were no longer considered desirable investments, some women were sold to other pimps. On the other hand, some women spoke of their pimps as the person who they perceived as taking care of them, loving them and ensuring that their needs - physical, emotional and sexual were met. As well, other women had relationships with men they referred to as boyfriends or partners, which covered the spectrum of caring to abusive dynamics.

The streetworkers found that abusive pimps certainly do exist. But at the same time, they also found that street prostitutes do not seem to need or want the current "living off the avails" section of the Criminal Code. While this section of the law is purported to address the problem of abusive or coercive pimps, it in fact prohibits any person to live wholly or in part off the earnings of a prostitute. Women working on the street perceive several problems with the law that does not address violence but instead tells a woman how she cannot dispose of her income from a legal profession. (Prostitutes are clear about the hypocrisy of soliciting being illegal while prostitution per se is legal.)

In no other occupation is a woman told by the state how she can dispose of her income. This law makes it a crime for anyone to be supported by her. They cannot legally choose to support their friends, lovers, or children. Linking an effort to control abuse and violent pimps to a law which dictates how a woman can dispose of her money implies that a person cannot love a prostitute, that prostitutes are unlovable and perhaps not capable of loving. It suggests that anyone who lives with a prostitute is doing so for the money. Further, it implies that if prostitutes are not willful fallen women by choice they are victims who are incapable of choosing how to dispose of their income.

Prostitutes do want access to legal and police protection against coercion and violence, like all other women. They believe that since prostitution is legal, if the behaviours surrounding it were decriminalized, they would be able to access police for help and not fear arrest themselves. This would deal with assault, extortion and exploitation rather than the current law which robs them of the dignity which all other women have to utilize their income as they choose.

#### G. EFFECTS OF BILL C-49

The institution of prostitution on the streets of Toronto is in great turmoil due to the passage of Bill C-49. Many women are having great difficulty financially, earning their living through prostitution and need alternative employment, but many lack basic literacy skills and education to access employment which would afford the same income as prostitution. To adequately provide for themselves while attempting a lifestyle transition



is a complicated process of change, practically, structurally and emotionally not only in relation to employment, but also personally in relation to their own consciousness. The process also involves dealing with practical issues such as housing, child care and custody issues, medical needs, addictions, nutrition and financial assistance.

As noted earlier, with the passing of Bill C-49 the 'pressing and persistent' pre-condition for arrest in relation to soliciting was removed from the Criminal Code. This has thus undoubtedly resulted in greater freedom of the police to arrest prostitutes for soliciting.

Many women charged under Bill C-49 receive curfews and/or boundaries as part of their bail order or probation sentence; the curfew may be as early as 7:00 p.m. and they may not be allowed to be/go to particular areas of the city which are known to be areas which women frequent in order to meet with customers. Feedback from the women indicates that even if they are seen on the street after curfew, going to the store or the movies, or shopping, visiting family or friends in the restricted areas, they are arrested and held overnight for another bail hearing. Women agree to the bail conditions knowing that if they don't, they will not be released.

The women talked extensively about the frequency of arrests. They often cannot afford a lawyer and simply plead guilty to do their time, even though this places their children, accommodation and belongings in jeopardy. Children may be left alone, taken to live with friends or relatives, or apprehended by C.A.S. Older children, with the departure of their mother, may leave home. If the sentence received extends over a period of time and their rent is not paid, women often lose their accommodation and their belongings are confiscated. If they leave their belongings with others, they may be lost or stolen during their incarceration. Upon return to the street after incarceration they then must completely re-establish themselves which requires that they work longer hours and take greater risks.

Few women appear to be earning enough money to save for school or housing. The necessities of life, food, shelter, clothing and medical needs, are often not available to them. The high legal costs of constant arrest is a major expense; lost earning time while incarcerated, as well as pimps and customers who don't pay also drain them financially, putting on pressure to work more often and take unnecessary risks. Women plead guilty both to cut down on the length of time they are incarcerated while waiting trial if they cannot make bail, or because they believe they will be found guilty in the end anyway. The sooner the trial is over, the sooner they can get back to the community and resume working. Bill C-49 has decreased the number of customers, as they too are frightened of arrest. With the increase in arrests the length of the woman's criminal record is extended. The likelihood of a prostitute being arrested is drastically greater than that of a customer being arrested as the women are much more known to the police. When the prostitute is arrested, the judge then notes the number of times she has been convicted of the same charge and thus gives her a jail sentence or a heavier fine. When the male customer is arrested, if ever, it is likely that it is his first arrest and therefore he receives a suspended sentence or a lighter fine.



Given all this, the women thus cannot afford to be as selective with "dates". Therefore, more work is conducted in the home or in costly motel rooms. Others are left to work in dark alleys or out of the way areas which offer no protection. More women who are working for themselves have returned to pimp-run operations (including massage parlours and escort services) and biker clubs for protection and financial help in arrests.

Some women were leaving Toronto, a known working environment, for other cities where they are less known and they have heard that the police are arresting vigorously. Others came from cities where the impact of the new law made working impossible. Thus, the support systems adult female street prostitutes had developed were being destroyed. Higher competition threatens any further development of their safety networks.

As a result of Bill C-49, women talked about retreating deeper into a prostitution-related subculture, back to pimps and dark alleys. They spoke of increased drug and alcohol dependency, inability to care for children, deepening debt and feelings of isolation, absence of alternative options to earn a living, very low self-esteem and fear.

#### H. WOMEN'S STATED NEEDS

##### 1. First Report - September 15, 1986

From May, 1986 to August 5, 1986, the project staff made contact with 59 female street prostitutes over the age of 19.

At September 15, 1986, their major concerns and difficulties stated by the target group were:

A) Housing - The housing problem is seen as a major issue for many of the women. They need affordable, long-term housing as opposed to crowded apartments. Rental accommodation is hard to obtain as women cannot provide for credit checks; landlords are fearful of being charged with keeping a bawdy house or of tenants who have unstable incomes and cannot give a place of employment. Hostels are inappropriate; they are confining for children, do not offer protection from pimps. Theft is a major concern and curfews prevent working.

B) Legal Services/Issues - many women do not qualify for legal aid as they don't have proof of earnings or of a means of support which is required by legal aid. Those who are on F.B.A. or G.W. A. will not indicate this as means of support for fear of being reported and having their benefits terminated. Others don't apply as they fear being investigated by the internal Revenue department. A soliciting charge is viewed as an implication that one earns their living as a prostitute and is not declaring her income for income tax purposes.

C) Medical Service - most women do not have OHIP as they cannot afford the payments and they can't qualify for premium assistance as documented proof of earnings is required for eligibility. Without premium assistance they cannot afford OHIP. Without



bank accounts they cannot pay by check. To see a doctor usually requires having the necessary cash. It was repeatedly stated that non-judgemental health services are needed. More information on sexually transmitted diseases is needed by the women. Although experienced prostitutes are aware of safe sex practices to avoid pregnancy and traditional sexually transmitted diseases, information about AIDS is relatively new. Television, radio and magazine information is more readily accessed by those who have televisions or buy newspapers. Women on the street who earn their living as prostitutes usually do not own televisions or come from socio-economic backgrounds which encourage reading; some are unable to read. Women who work in the middle and upper class rungs of prostitution, in escort services or in expensive private practice, are much more likely to find out about AIDS and precautions from mainstream health education campaigns. Street prostitutes may well be among the last to receive the necessary information, and require education on the street and in the places they frequent.

D) Financial Assistance - more information is needed on financial assistance and skill development regarding financial management.

E) Safe House - the need for a safe place for women to extricate themselves from dangerous situations or to remove themselves and their children in emergencies.

F) Storefront/Drop-In - help with legal questions, medical services, counselling, crisis intervention and support, telephones, referrals, practical assistance, washrooms, food and coffee available 24 hours, so women can come at any time when their immediate need is great enough to seek assistance as well as being conducive to their working hours. The storefront/drop-in could become a centre for developing trust with street prostitutes, from which the streetworkers do outreach and in which assistance and safety are provided, including referral to the safe house for those women who wish to get off the street.

G) Child Care - need for assistance and service for their children and parenting experiences for themselves which are non-judgemental regarding how the women earn their living. Many of the women with whom the streetworkers engaged indicated that they felt in the minds of many the assumption was that being a prostitute meant being unable to care emotionally, physically and spiritually for their children.

## II. Second Report - November 17, 1986

By November, 1986, 163 women had been contacted. Due to the mobility of the population, about 100 of the women were seen once, 40 women up to 12 times each and 23 women up to 30 times each. The women ranged in age from 19-47, with the bulk of the population aged 19-26.

By this point in the project, additional needs which had been identified were:

A) Permanent Streetworkers - the women felt fearful of traditional services being judgemental and intrusive. The women thus required knowledge of services which were available, that the streetworkers recommended for quality and supportive perspective



when engaging with the women. Women often require accompaniment to agencies, and court. In order to build up self-confidence and self-respect, to care enough to seek help, the women need someone who consistently shows her respect as a person while validating the beginning self recognition of the problems in her life, and helping her to learn problem-solving processes. Streetworkers were felt to be a critical support mechanism in assisting women to make constructive changes in their lives or to leave prostitution. The consistent presence and respectful approach of the streetworker acts as a catalyst to the development of trust and thus leads to the women reaching out for assistance. The immediate very much takes priority. Streetlife generally involves living and supporting oneself, and one's family, on a day to day basis for economic reasons. Further exacerbating this reality is the impact on the adult functioning and self-esteem of abusive and unstable early life experiences including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, incest, neglect, and a series of foster home and institutional placements. These experiences of abuse and related feelings of betrayal, stigmatization and sense of powerlessness (amongst other feelings) lead many of the women to believe they have no practical options nor do many possess the self-confidence to make changes on longterm plans. Thus the immediate very much takes priority. While ten women had contacted the streetworkers via the pager (in situations of arrest, suicidal feelings, assault or eviction) most utilized the streetworkers when they were seen in person. They are reluctant to speak in front of others; they often do not show up for appointments made during office hours and operate on their own time, or a day to day basis. Streetworkers are needed on the street to make contact, as the women do not have telephones, nor do many have a permanent address for follow-up or additional contact.

B) Community Education - to inform the wider community of the real problems and difficulties experienced by adult female street prostitutes and the complexities of the problems associated with prostitution. To show the community how it can become involved in assisting the women with a better understanding of the complexities of the problem of prostitution, the community may be less ready to scapegoat the prostitute. With a better understanding of the reality of her life; service providers, employers, landlords, families may become less judgemental and actually develop attitudes and services which are helpful and seem to be helpful thereby helping her to feel equal in the community, and increasing the likelihood she will gain the self-esteem to make beneficial lifestyle changes for themselves.

### III. Final Report - May 8, 1987

By the time of the completion of the project, the complexity of the problems experienced by adult female street prostitutes had become clearer and their expressed needs had been reinforced.

#### I. WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The majority of women contacted felt that traditional services were not effective in meeting their needs. It was felt that the service providers had an orientation to try to change the women, so therefore were not able to really hear the women's needs and help



them address their articulated concerns. The women felt social service providers predominately had no real knowledge of the realities of their lives as prostitutes, and dealt with them as stereotypes from preconceptions, and not as individuals with individual needs. Real or perceived judgement on the part of social services agencies left the women feeling unwelcome or ill at ease, therefore they did not choose to access the services, which left them dependent on themselves or on the street culture.

Women with children who are experiencing difficulties in childcare or parenting feel they have no safe place to turn for assistance. Once it is known that they earn their living through prostitution, the children are at risk of being removed. The women thus fear turning to C.A.S. for help.

Long-term, affordable housing is difficult for anyone to find. For a prostitute, there is the additional problem of discussing her means of income when applying for assistance, or this being discovered later. Consequently, she tends to move from cheap motel to shared accomodation with other friends and their children. Emergency hostels are not felt appropriate due to lack of privacy, curfews and staff attitudes to women engaged in prostitution. If she is beaten or abused the prostitute does not feel able to call on the police for help.

Hassle Free Clinic for Women is the sole medical service identified where women without O.H.I.P. do not have to pay high fees, or where the women felt they did not endure moralistic judgements. The vast majority of women do not have medical coverage. In case of illness, especially of their children, they must work longer to earn extra money. When the women are raped or beaten they do not seek medical help, as they do not anticipate understanding from the service providers, nor do they wish to heighten their profile through hospital or police records of their coming for help.

The women do not tend to utilize alcohol detox facilities as they feel the short term nature of admission does not adequately address the addiction or the underlying personal and lifestyle issues. To become involved in longer drug or alcohol treatment programs, the woman must find someone to care for her children and if she is not working, she has no source of income. Generally treatment programs are limited, admission criteria are very particular and some are simply unaffordable. Program staff tend to require the woman to change her method of earning a living while dealing with her alcohol or drug dependency. Many women feel the former is a long term goal or not a goal at all and should not be a pre-requisite for admission into an addiction treatment program.

About 75% of the women contacted had been charged under Section 195.1 more than once. A few women had been charged as many as four times in a week. Women are reluctant to apply for Legal Aid assistance because an application requires disclosure of personal information and source of income; they fear government audits and future scrutiny of their earnings. Thus, women either plead guilty or retain a private lawyer, which again requires going out on the street and risking another charge. The payment of fines, (the sentence often given upon conviction), involves going out to work to earn the necessary money and the possibility of another charge. It seems ironic to them that the penalties imposed by society for working as a prostitute (which is legal in the first place)



involve fines, lawyer fees and lost time which in fact require them to work more to fulfill the penalty.

## 11. SERVICES PROVIDED BY STREETWORKERS

### A) Referral

- lawyers numbers;
- medical information, especially referrals to Hassle Free Clinic for Women, which has a good reputation for respecting anonymity and being non-judgemental;
- chiropractors;
- retraining programs;
- battered women's shelters;
- housing (O.H.C.);
- short term shelter - hostels;
- Beat the Street program - for literacy development;
- information about clothing, furniture, food;
- The Canadian Association for the Rights of Prostitutes for help in acquiring safe working conditions and advocacy for prostitutes' rights;
- S.O.S. - for women under the age of 19

### B) Practical Assistance

- distribution of birth control materials, information;
- information on sexually transmitted diseases, especially A.I.D.S.;
- assistance with budgeting;
- advocacy with social services/landlords;
- accompaniment and support at court appearances.

### C. Crisis Intervention

- assistance when in crisis; streetworkers were accessed by the pager;
- they then dealt with a variety of concerns, including assisting women to leave abusive and dangerous situations, access immediate medical care, support when feelings of fear, helplessness, depression, etc. became overwhelming.

### D. Counselling

- informal counselling wherein a wide array of concerns were addressed, including difficulties in relationships, parenting, drug and alcohol addictions, feelings of helplessness, isolation, low self-esteem.

## 12. FOLLOW-THROUGH ON REFERRALS

It appears that about 50% of the women given referrals follow through, as these were immediate, pressing needs. Follow through rates on counselling for abuse, depression,



addiction, etc. is much lower and the process of getting a woman ready to undertake this help is much longer. Most women cannot afford to acknowledge their psycho-socio problems as the pain is too great, and the lifestyle options appear negligible. Long term support and encouragement through a known, trusted service appears essential to assist the women to get to a point of utilizing the services they will need to gain self-awareness and the self-respect to make significant changes to empower themselves in their lives.

### 13. METHOD OF SERVICE DELIVERY

By November 1986, it was clear to the streetworkers that the majority of street prostitutes are in such a precarious state of survival that they cannot afford to make many life-planning decisions, economically, or emotionally. Goal setting is a process many of the women do not use. The lifestyle so inherent in the process of earning a living through prostitution does not enable them to pursue needs or plans beyond the immediate situation.

The women are in danger constantly. The police officers enforcing prostitution related charges, the pimp demanding his money, an addiction that is expensive and high competition on the street keep the women in fear and living day to day, "hand to mouth". Intervention, as a result, must initially be geared to their immediate needs. It is imperative that the deliverers of service be non-judgemental and open to self-identified needs of the women.

#### Streetwork

Streetwork has been discussed in depth earlier in this report, and therefore will not be reiterated here. The streetworkers felt very strongly that this method is an essential component of service delivery to this target group. Indeed, it has been in practice in such European cities as Amsterdam for several years, as an established component of mainstream social service agencies commitment to serving adult female street prostitutes.

### 14. REFERRALS TO THE PROJECT

As the project became known to the community, referrals began to be made to the streetworkers. For example: a doctor in Wellesley Hospital on duty in emergency, referred a woman working the streets to the streetworkers for sexual assault counselling after she was beaten and raped by an ex-boyfriend. The doctor was the wife of an assistant crown counsel who was aware of the goals of the project through conversation with the streetworker during the Jennifer Smith trial.

The cook in the kitchen of a hotel on Sherbourne Street catering to the street subculture, conveyed the existence of the project to the women working in prostitution that approached her with concerns about illness, domestic violence, homelessness, criminal charges, or difficulties with family or C.A.S., and drug and alcohol addictions. Referrals eventually extended to hotel and motel clerks, and strip clubs managers and other women and men working in other aspects of the sex trade and in the street subculture.



## 15. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING SERVICES AND METHODS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Programs and services must be flexible enough to meet the individual needs of women at their particular stage of self-awareness and in relation to their particular issues and needs. The priority list for the development of services and programs to meet the needs of adult female street prostitutes must begin with their most pressing needs.

A. Streetworkers - eventually working out of the storefront Drop-In Centre, the necessary first component of a multi-faceted service delivery program, in order to initiate contacts with women and begin to establish trusting supportive relationships to enable the women to begin to utilize services, to follow through on referrals and to disclose information about the difficulties they are experiencing. The referrals needed are particularly for affordable long-term housing and others in Section 11, #1; for practical assistance as in Section 11, #2; crisis intervention as in Section 11, #3 and counselling as in Section 11, #4.

B. Storefront Drop-in - including 24 hour service with telephones, washroom facilities, child care including crisis child care service, clothing, food. Reception, referrals, practical assistance, counselling, befriending, crisis intervention, group counselling sessions, (e.g. parenting, retraining, self esteem, financial/budgeting assistance) will also be part of the service offered. As well, individual counselling, including crisis intervention, support and long-term therapy with an on-call counsellor experienced in rape, battering, incest and other forms of violence against women and addiction counselling will be offered. Staff must be experienced in the street subculture, realities of prostitution and be aware of the magnitude and multiplicity of problems faced by women trying to get out of prostitution. Volunteers will assist women with practical concerns, befriending, accompaniment to appointments. There will be emergency funds, e.g. moving expenses; advocacy with C.A.S., Public Health Department, etc. to not intervene without just cause, just because the women declare themselves as prostitutes and seek assistance; and literacy training.

C. Community Education - including education with existing social service providers, e.g. drug and alcohol treatment programs at detox centres, to sensitize them to the realities of street prostitutes and to their individual problems; with support and low cost housing groups to create long term affordable housing for women engaged in prostitution; with the police to provide protection and assistance when the women are in danger.

D. Safe House - for escape in emergencies, similarly structured as battered women's shelters, to provide support and service to the woman to re-establish herself. The location of the safe house however would not be generally known as it is paramount to provide her with a safe environment. The women would be aware that a safe-house existed and that they could access it through the staff. Safety precautions would be similar to those adopted by the women's shelters.

E. Long-Term Child Care - provision for child care for varying periods, i.e. two months for women wishing to attend in-patient drug and alcohol treatment programs.



## 16: CONCLUSION

The goals of the project were to determine the social service needs and effective methods of service delivery to adult female street prostitutes in Toronto through street-work outreach in order to develop a multi-faceted program of services and service delivery.

The goals of this project were not to attempt to undertake an indepth study of the institution of prostitution, nor the indepth causes of certain women becoming prostitutes. It was not an attempt to unilaterally convince the adult female street prostitutes contacted to pursue other lifestyles or means of earning their income.

Nor was this project an attempt to undertake a rigorous piece of research. The fluidity of the population makes that goal difficult and the staff who were hired, who were prepared to work the hours and under the conditions inherent in the goals of the project, were not professionally trained researchers but rather streetworkers.

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto believes that the issue of prostitution is very complex and that a focus on the prostitutes as the problem is both an ineffective and discriminatory social response. Clearly, adult female street prostitutes are undeniably a target group who sometimes have multiple and profound needs, who are ostracized by and alienated from mainstream society. Street prostitutes are predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds, and as such, have problems similar to many other women which emanate from these conditions. It does not appear that their problems are because they are prostitutes, except to the extent that the current legislation contributes to an institution of prostitution which creates many specific additional difficulties to women who work as street prostitutes, particularly isolation, alienation, social stigmatization, danger and violence. Most importantly, the current social and legal proscriptions against prostitutes and related activities means that unlike other women with needs, they do not access or feel assisted by mainstream services. This project was not undertaken from a perspective that adult female street prostitutes are unusually disturbed because of what they do, but that their needs, as women with needs in our society, are not being addressed. Clearly this situation must be changed.

This project has shown that through streetwork and the provision of assistance in an immediate way with a nonjudgemental and individual focus, a relationship with service providers can be developed wherein a woman feels accepted and is able to more openly discuss her circumstances both emotional and social. She can then begin to examine and realize the options available to her in her present and potentially future emotional and social context.

It is the hope of this project that the information and recommendations in this report will be useful to other communities and social service providers in general. Most importantly, it is the hope of the project that the recommendations for services and types of service delivery will indeed be operationalized in the very near future.



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