

ANNUAL REPORT

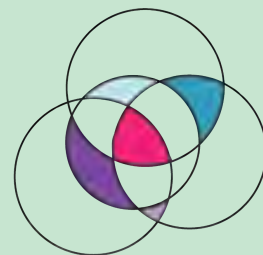
AWRCSASA

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre &
Sexual Assault Services Association
www.awrcsasa.ca
902-863-6221
219 Main Street, Suite 204 Kirk Place
Antigonish, NS, B2G 2C1

2023-2024

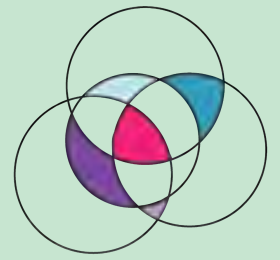
prepared and submitted by:

Anita Stewart, Executive Director
Moraig Macgillivray, Operations Manager
AWRCSASA staff



Antigonish Women's Centre
& Sexual Assault Services

OUR MISSION

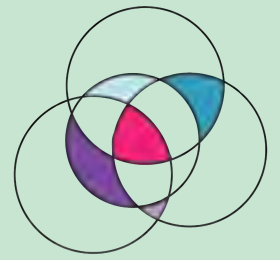


THE ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES ASSOCIATION

is an independent, feminist, community-based organization that works to create personal, community, and social change for women and their families through direct services, community development, education, and celebration.



OUR FEMINISM AND OUR VALUES



Our feminism advocates for the decision-making agency of diverse women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people and challenges all of the societal barriers that undermine their choices, freedoms, gifts, and humanity. We work to be empathetic and nonjudgmental, appreciating the whole lives, varied journeys, and expertise of women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people. We work to be action-oriented, intersectional, and critical in confronting all oppressions against women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people and in redistributing power to and with them.

The **values** that guide us are:

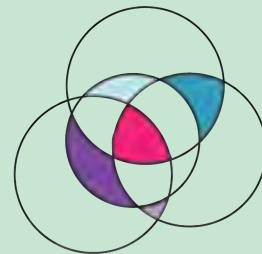
Taking Action for a Just World

Support and Nurturance

Collaboration

Inclusion

ABOUT OUR WORK



As a Women's Centre and Sexual Assault Centre, we offer programs that benefit the community as a whole as well as facilitated support programs specifically for women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people. Our sexual assault services are available to survivors of all genders.

We work...

- at a **collective** level, providing educational and support programs for people of all genders
- at a **community** level, through community development initiatives and by providing workshops and presentations for the public, schools, and service providers, and
- at a **systemic** and **institutional** level, addressing the structural barriers that women and other groups who experience oppression face as they try to take control of their lives, and by advocating for more just and equitable public policies and programs to be implemented.

Direct Services

- Information
- Check-ins and supportive listening
- Problem solving and supportive counselling
- Crisis counseling
- Advocacy and accompaniment

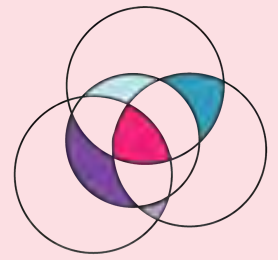
Programs

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program
- Specialized trauma therapy program
- Lindsay's Health Centre for Women
- Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties
- Antigonish-Guysborough Immigrant Support Program
- Healthy Relationships for Youth
- Emergency financial assistance
- Wellness and skills-building programs
- Healthy Relationships, violence prevention, and education programs
- Circles of Support and Change
- Together Tuesdays

Community Development & Social Advocacy

- Sexualized Violence Prevention
- Poverty Reduction
- Honoring, celebrating, and remembering

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

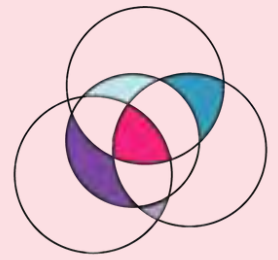


As I reflect on the past year, one of my favorite memories is celebrating with so many individuals the 40th Anniversary of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association. We gathered in October to commemorate the past, celebrate the present and look forward to the future. There was laughter and tears of happiness, great memories shared, wonderful stories, amazing food and entertainment, and inspirational guest speakers! The AWRCSSA is a true testament of strength, compassion, perseverance and speaks to the amazing women who have and continue to help navigate the pathways for women, girls, Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people.

As Executive Director, I watch with admiration each day as our dedicated staff show up to consistently and diligently work to support and meet the needs of the individuals we serve. The challenges many individuals are struggling with continue to grow; food insecurity, poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, mental health issues, with many individuals facing multiple concerns, further compounding their hardships.

In May of 2023, I was afforded the opportunity to go to Whitehorse and attend a conference hosted at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre. Women and allies from across the country gathered daily to speak about the many challenges individuals are facing in our society and what we can do to mitigate these challenges. We enthusiastically learned from many panel discussions about financial literacy in the non-profit sector, solutions to improve the lives of everyone in our nation, feminism and what it looks like today, violence in other countries, etc. Our days were also spent learning from each other in brainstorming sessions and learning about each others organizations and how to collaborate. We were treated to cultural dancing and drumming by the Inland Dakhla Khwaan Dancers. The landscape and people of Whitehorse were absolutely amazing and the hospitality shown to us was outstanding and heartwarming. I will be forever grateful to the NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women for their generosity in providing me with this opportunity of a lifetime.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Through all of the challenges, we continue to forge ahead and this year has proven to be one of success. Our Healthy Relationships for Youth program has received enough funding to implement a province-wide expansion, from the South Shore to Northern Cape Breton. The Nova Scotia Status of Women not only recognized HRY as a violence prevention program for youth, but also that HRY addresses several of the Mass Casualty Commission Recommendations in their final report, Turning the Tide Together. HRY is also credited with addressing the second pillar of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP), which is Prevention. The combined funding from the NS Status of Women and the Public Health Agency of Canada, will allow us to reach students in a capacity we previously were not able to do. Collaborating with schools across Nova Scotia will increase the knowledge of so many students while providing the foundation for youth to recognize healthy relationships, the many ways violence shows up in society and its personal and societal impact. To say we are honoured and excited is an understatement! Being able to implement this expansion to make a difference in the lives of youth is truly remarkable. We want to express extreme gratitude to the NS Status of Women and the Public Health Agency of Canada, your funding will impact the youth of NS for years to come.

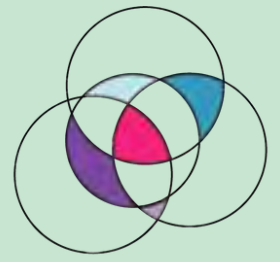
Our Centre continues to 'expand' and we have found ourselves in precarious situation of not having enough space to allow for more growth. We made the decision to look for alternative space to house the Centre. In this real estate market, finding a suitable and affordable solution has proven challenging, but we are continuing to look for an alternative space.

On behalf of the AWRCASASA Board and Staff, we thank you for your continued support of the invaluable work being carried out at the Centre.

Respectfully,
Anita Stewart
Executive Director



A MESSAGE FROM OUR OPERATIONS MANAGER



In a year that marked the 40th anniversary of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services, the release of the Mass Casualty Commission's final report, and the completion of the Lionel Desmond Inquiry, the importance of our work is being acknowledged, and that acknowledgment comes with improved funding.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women provided bridge funding for Healthy Relationships for Youth, a peer-facilitated violence-prevention program, so that it could continue in the Strait Regional Centre for Education and the Northern Region of the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial for the 2023-2024 academic year. As we approach its completion, they have agreed to fund a provincial expansion of the program, starting in the 2024-2025 school year. Coupled with expected new funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, we are hopeful that the program will be in every regional centre for education in the next five years.

More secure than project funding, we rely on core funding to sustain our operations from year to year. One of the recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission was to increase funding to organizations that serve women, and as a signatory to the National Action Plan to Reduce Gender Based Violence, the provincial government has committed to increasing our core funding. This will help us to retain our experienced,

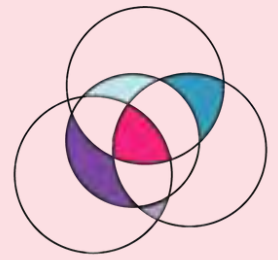
knowledgeable, and trauma-informed staff and to recruit top quality candidates as we hire new people. As our funding grows, our vision for what is possible grows, and we continue to adapt our space at the Kirk Building to maximize our ability to support women, girls, and gender diverse folk in the community. The Lindsay's Health Centre for Women is currently undergoing some operational and structural changes. Starting on May 21, the medical receptionist will work more hours and will be situated in the former SANE office so that the clinic has its own entrance. This will improve confidentiality and result in less disruption to the Centre on days when the clinic is running. This change has displaced the SANE coordinator, and we have created a new office space for her in the room that was once used for storage. Items that had been stored there are now in a storage locker at Freedom Self Storage.

While we are being as efficient as possible with our current space, we recognize that it is keeping us from realizing our full potential. In looking toward the future, we have decided to purchase real estate and hope to build a new Centre that would be net-zero which would reduce our operating expenses along with our carbon footprint. We plan to launch a "Building a Sustainable Future" campaign for the AWRCASASA in the coming months and look forward to creating a welcoming space to call home in the decades to come.



HIGHLIGHTS

40TH ANNIVERSARY

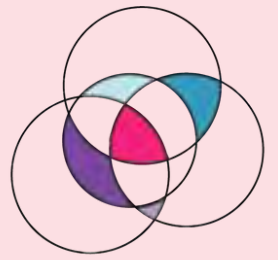


40TH ANNIVERSARY

On October 28 staff, board, and community members gathered at Saint Ninian's Place to mark the 40th anniversary of the AWRCSSASA. The event was catered by Louie's Cosy Corner, and after breaking bread we heard from former ED Lucille Harper, and Heather Blackburn, a former Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner at the Centre and current Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Advocate at Saint Francis Xavier University. Our long-serving Women's Services Coordinator, Vangie Babin, was recognized for her 28+ years of tireless dedication, and we were entertained by the Wandering Menstruals, a local women's choir, as well as Antigonish Improv. The event was also a successful fundraiser. Multiple businesses from the town and county donated items and services to the silent auction, which raised \$3855.00 to be used for direct services for women. Vangie led a fundraising drive that involved "Preserve Jars"-- mason jars were fitted with a label depicting a timeline of Women's Centre-led initiatives--raising \$200.00. A 50/50 draw raised \$391.50 for the Centre. All in all, the event was a tremendous success and it was wonderful to feature our work in the community.

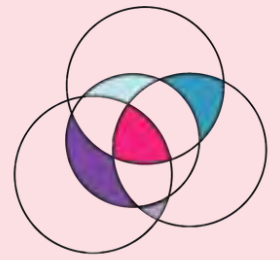
HIGHLIGHTS

40TH ANNIVERSARY



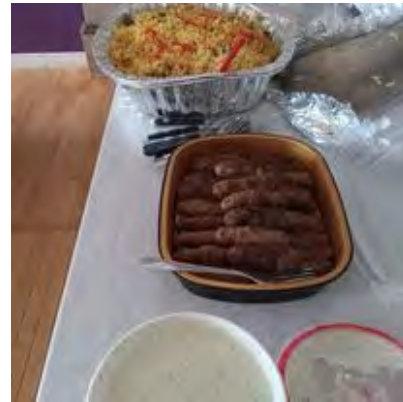
HIGHLIGHTS

IN THE COMMUNITY



The Antigonish Chamber of Commerce honoured the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association at their annual gala.

Staff was treated to authentic Pakistani cuisine when Asma Bari's mother came to visit Antigonish.

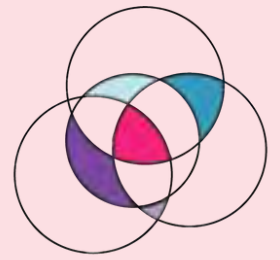


Lemonade Days--Led by our fabulous summer students, we offered Main Street walkers free lemonade on hot summer days!



HIGHLIGHTS

IN THE COMMUNITY



The AWRCSSA engaged with the public at the Highland Games Street Fair and raised awareness about our 40th Anniversary!



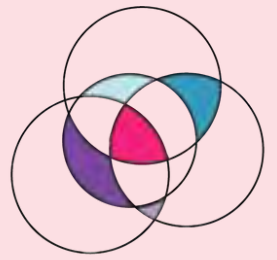
International Women's Week

Pamela (SANE manager) and Taeya (HRY Coordinator) marked IWW by raising awareness about the SANE program and the Centre at StFX.



HIGHLIGHTS

STAFF PLANNING RETREAT

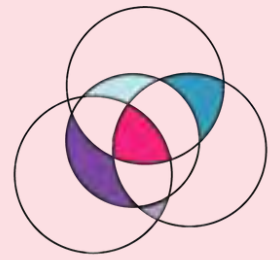


This year's Staff Planning event brought us to the Tatamagouche Centre for a two-day retreat during which we participated in a staff meeting, SWOT analysis, law information session, painting lesson, feedback session, and special presentation to Vangie, as this was her last staff planning meeting before her retirement in December.



HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLAND GAMES PARADE



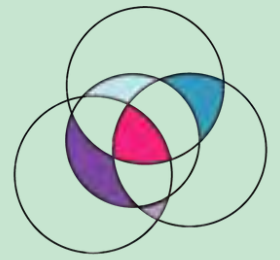
HIGHLAND GAMES PARADE

For the first time in our history, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association took part in the Highland Games Parade. We had a warm reception among parade goers, with numerous community members showing their support for our Centre with raucous hoots and hollers. Staff marched alongside a decorated truck with placards that read "40 Years of [insert examples of the good works of the Women's Centre]." Our entry placed second in the competition.



FAREWELL

TO VANGIE



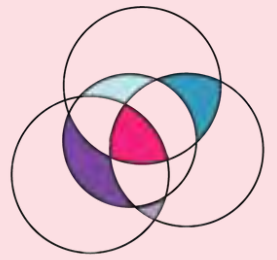
After 28+ years as the first friendly face to greet visitors to the AWRCSSASA, Vangie is enjoying her well-deserved retirement. We bid her farewell in multiple ways--a presentation at the 2023 AGM, a Vangie-themed trivia activity at our annual staff planning retreat, and an open house in her honour--but we can never fully show our appreciation for the contribution she made to the Women's Centre and the impact she has had on all of our lives.

So long, Vangie!



WELCOME

TO KAREN KEIZER



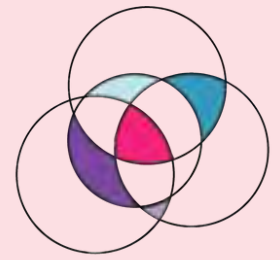
WOMEN'S SUPPORT COORINATOR

With big proverbial shoes to fill, Karen Keizer, the new Women's Services Coordinator, is wearing her own shoes and defining the role for herself perfectly. She greets people with kindness and compassion and makes everyone feel welcome. Her transition into the role of Women's Services Coordinator has been seamless, and we are so glad to have her!



WOMEN'S SUPPORT COORDINATOR: KAREN KEIZER

REPORT



In order to summarize the year, I have to go back beyond my time with the Centre, as I didn't begin my position until December 1, 2023. My understanding is that it was a very busy year with lots of exciting events surrounding the celebration of the 40th Anniversary.

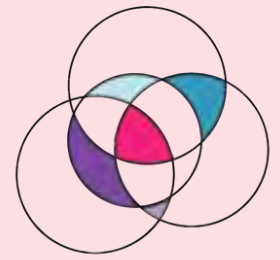
Most of my time thus far has been spent familiarizing myself with the day-to-day operations of the Centre in order to best serve our clients, to assist my fellow co-workers, and to observe areas where I feel adjustments or reorganization may benefit my ability to achieve these goals. By the end of January, social media became a focus, and over the last few months we have seen a definite increase in followers and interest in both our social media accounts. The increase can be directly attributed to coordinating with Taeya on the contest draws for International Women's Day, as well as a consistent, informative posting schedule. Accessing the STFX student population through the information table, giveaways, and draws had a positive impact on our social media awareness as well. As we know, social media is a wonderful way to promote the Centre, our beliefs, initiatives, and the movements we support.

I really enjoy creating content for both social media and materials for the Centre. I was able to design our new Thank You cards as well as some of the posts for both Facebook and Instagram. Working with the Canva platform has been great fun, and I look forward to future projects.

Learning the various resources and agencies we work with has been one of the challenges that I have faced since accepting this position. My predecessor had 28+ years of experience and a wealth of knowledge; thankfully she left the Centre well organized and ready for the transition. Spending time with her and listening to her conversations with clients and those of other staff has helped with this challenge.

**WOMEN'S SUPPORT COORDINATOR:
KAREN KEIZER**

REPORT CONTINUED

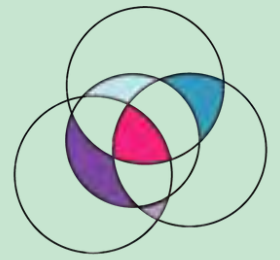


Working with the clients and staff at the Centre is a privilege and something I do not take for granted. When starting my position, I knew I was kind, compassionate, and empathic, and I felt well suited for the position, but I did have concerns because I didn't have specific training for some of the different situations I face with clients coming into the Centre. Taking additional training (Diversity Training, ASIST Training, and Trauma Informed Training) has given me more confidence in my abilities to handle various situations as they present themselves and in the abilities I unknowingly already had. I look forward to continuing to learn and build on these skills moving forward.

In the year ahead I hope to get the volunteer program back up and running. I felt it was important to allow myself time to learn the workings of the Centre before I took on this responsibility. I also plan to continue to grow our social media following by holding more contests and keeping our content informative, interesting, and fun (on occasion). Consistency is key to achieving this goal as well as being open to new ideas from fellow staff members. My main goal remains the same, to provide a welcoming, safe, and knowledgeable environment for everyone who enters the Centre and to assist my co-workers when needed.

I have worked to ensure a seamless transition between Vangie and myself, trying to learn the position as quickly and efficiently as possible. In conclusion I am beyond thrilled to spend each day in this special work environment, working with both the clients and the wonderful staff of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services. I look forward to many more years in this role!

AWRCSASA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



5409 Core Contacts

Calls: **2168**

Emails: **572**

Visits: **2669**

452 Project Contacts

Donations: \$64,521.73

Direct Mail: **\$2,3729.02**

Street Fair: **\$49.80**

IMO Barb: **\$48.25**

40th Ann. 50/50: **\$391.50**

Silent Auction: **\$3,855.00**

Preserving Jars: **\$200.00**

Other: **\$36,248.16**

Opportunity Shop Vouchers: 316

Date	Number of Vouchers Distributed
Apr, 2023	25
May 2023	23
June 2023	30
July 2023	19
Aug 2023	38
Sept 2023	31

Date	Number of Vouchers Distributed
Oct 2023	21
Nov 2023	28
Dec 2023	16
Jan 2024	28
Feb 2024	22
Mar 2024	35

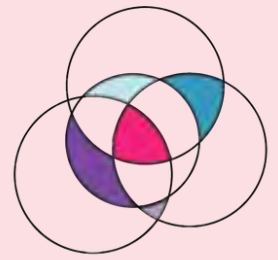


Social Media

Date	Facebook Reached	Facebook Visits	FB New Followers	Instagram Reached	Insta Visits	Insta New Followers
Apr 2023	4800	251	12	124	39	0
May 2023	3900	407	17	5	21	0
June 2023	7800	875	47	7	14	0
July 2023	26000	1700	105	69	16	8
Aug 2023	10000	902	23	120	13	4
Sept 2023	5200	727	21	81	20	9
Oct 2023	3800	962	36	35	284	12
Nov 2023	1900	560	21	56	28	7
Dec 2023	5600	1100	11	123	38	8
Jan 2024	4500	708	31	191	43	13
Feb 2024	13400	1500	40	295	121	14
Mar 2024	19400	2200	82	486	243	71
Totals	106300	11892	446	1592	880	146

TOGETHER TUESDAYS

SUBMITTED BY OLIVIA HART



TOGETHER TUESDAYS

Together Tuesdays was an initiative that began with the hopes of bringing women from the area together to foster new relationships and reduce feelings of loneliness. The participants share a meal together each session while enjoying different activities. Ten women were invited to participate, and each session had an average of seven women attending. The sessions began June 13th, 2023, and ran for 10 sessions, held once a week at the Centre. The activities consisted of the following:

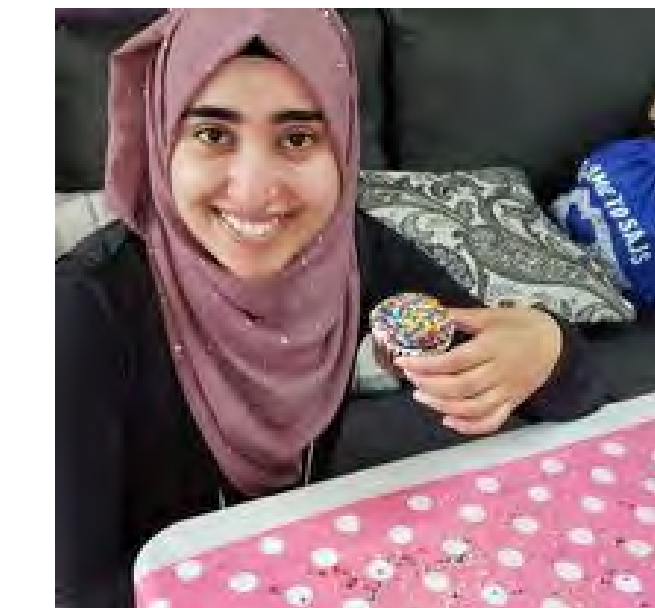
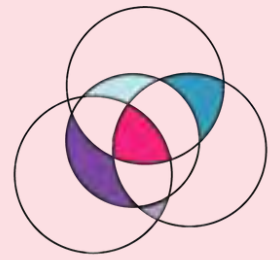
GAME NIGHT
PAINT NIGHT WITH VANGIE
CRAFT NIGHT
SPA NIGHT
BINGO
MUSIC NIGHT WITH TOM CURRY
ICE CREAM SOCIAL
HEALING BLOOMS WITH HEATHER
BLACKBURN
CUPCAKE AND COOKIE DECORATING
WRAP UP PARTY AND SURVEYS



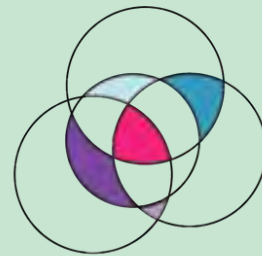
The program was a great success! The women built strong bonds with each other and shared contact information during the final session to continue socializing. The last session included a survey, in which 100% of the participants expressed an interest in continuing the program. As a result Together Tuesdays started up again in March 2024 and is currently ongoing. The sessions in March 2024 included another paint night with Vangie and a self-care/spa night.

TOGETHER TUESDAYS

SUBMITTED BY OLIVIA HART



CREATIVE CIRCLE



Month	# weeks and attendance	Monthly Total Participants	# of participants
April, 2023	3 weeks- 5,7,4	16	7
May, 2023	4 weeks- 7,7,6,4	24	8
June, 2023	4 weeks- 4, 5, 5, 5	19	6
July, 2023	Paused for Summer	0	0
Aug, 2023	Paused for Summer	0	0
Sept, 2023	2 weeks- 3,4	7	4
Oct, 2023	3 weeks- 3,4,3	10	5
Nov, 2023	3 weeks- 6,4,3	13	7
Dec, 2023	2 weeks- 4,7	11	7
Jan, 2024	3 weeks- 4, 5, 6	15	6
Feb, 2023	2 weeks- 5, 7	12	7
Mar, 2023	4 weeks- 5,2,6,5	18	8

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH



SUBMITTED BY TAEYA JONES AND EMILY TRUDEAU

Name of Project	Healthy Relationships for Youth
Name of Project Coordinators	Taeya Jones & Emily Trudeau
2022-2023 School Year Stats	8 Schools in the SRCE (18 grade 9 classes)
	5 schools in the CSAP Northern Region (6 grade 9 classes)
2023-2024 School Year Stats	6 schools in the SRCE (16 grade 9 classes)
	5 schools in the CSAP Northern Region (6 grade 9 classes)

During the 2022-2023 school year, Kayleigh Trenholm (SRCE) and Emily Trudeau (CSAP) worked to get HRY re-energized after the school closures and disruptions of Covid. Most of the schools within the SRCE that had participated in HRY in the past are fully engaged with the program again, and all schools in the northern region of the CSAP are participating. In the spring of 2023 the HRY team hosted Spark the Change, our annual youth leadership retreat, with a diverse group of current and former youth facilitators, a great opportunity for teambuilding and the exchange of ideas. During the summer of 2023, summer students Olivia Hart and Jasmin Desmond and violence prevention coordinator Asma Bari worked with the HRY team to update the curriculum, instituting many of the revisions suggested by students and youth facilitators. Taeya Jones took over coordinating the program in the SRCE for the 2023-24 school year, and HRY maintains a strong presence in the Strait Region. Taeya and Emily also collaborate with other staff members to present consent workshops in schools and promote the AWRC in our community.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH

SUBMITTED BY TAEYA JONES AND EMILY TRUDEAU



Challenges and Solutions

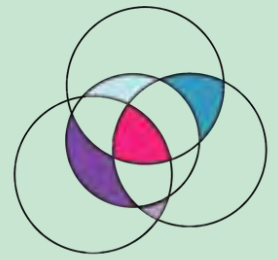
In some smaller schools, HRY faces a lack of youth facilitators. We have worked to recruit young people to the program through information sessions and flexible parameters (using facilitation toward Coop hours, working with leadership classes, etc.). In one school, the health teacher prefers that HRY staff teach the grade 9 students directly, but this runs counter to the idea of peer facilitation. We are actively working with staff at that school to get the program up and running with youth facilitators. One of the biggest challenges we face, however, is scheduling. Schools are incredibly busy places; school-based events, storm days, and other disruptions can make it difficult for youth facilitators to get into the grade 9 classes 12 times, and bigger schools face added scheduling complications. HRY remains as flexible as possible, working to make sure that the program fits into each school in a way that encourages teachers and students to benefit from it as much as possible.

Hopes for the Future

With additional funding coming from both the provincial government (through the Status of Women) and the federal government (through the Public Health Agency of Canada), we are looking forward to a year of expansion and progress. At the end of the 2021-2022 fiscal year, we were not sure if there would be adequate funding to continue the program at all, and one year later we find ourselves in a position to expand throughout Nova Scotia. This recognition of the program's value and importance is very exciting, and we look forward to a busy year ahead.

YOUTH PROGRAM FACILITATOR REPORT

SUBMITTED BY JASMIN DESMOND



Healthy Relationships for Youth

Curriculum Updating

Throughout the year, the HRY curriculum was reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant and effective for the diverse student population it serves. This involved incorporating new research, feedback from educators, and insights from the participants to enhance the overall learning experience.

Check-Ins at Schools

Regular check-ins were conducted at various schools to monitor the implementation of the HRY program. These visits provided valuable opportunities to gather feedback from students and teachers, assess the program's impact, and make necessary adjustments to better meet the needs of the youth.

Trainings

Training sessions were held for new facilitators. These sessions gave the knowledge and skills needed to effectively deliver the curriculum.



Knowledge Seekers Summer Camp - STFX

Presentation: Healthy Relationship with Ourselves

Date: August 7th, 2023

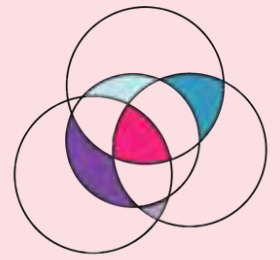
Facilitators: Jasmin Desmond & Asma Bari

Introduction: The Knowledge Seekers Summer Camp is designed to empower African Nova Scotian students. It focuses on academic subjects such as Math, Science, and Literacy, while also providing opportunities to explore African Nova Scotia heritage and roots. The camp fosters a nurturing and supportive environment for 24 students from grades 3 to 7.

Event Overview: The HRY team was invited to conduct a presentation on cultivating healthy relationships with oneself. The agenda included four main topics:

1. Overview of relationship with our bodies
2. Puberty
3. Hygiene
4. Self-care

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE



SUBMITTED BY JACKIE JACQUES AND CINDY DOIRON



2023-2024 Financial Report

The finance department has had another busy year accounting for revenues and expenses in a timely manner. We work with the executive director and staff on expenses and budgets and report to funders and the board of directors as required.

Our main source of funding for AWRC is the Department of Community Services via the NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women. NS Health funds our SANE program and partially funds one of our Women's Support Workers and the Lindsay's Health Centre.

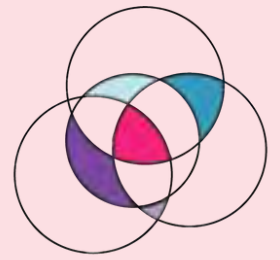
Our Trauma Therapy program was funded through surpluses from previous years. We received funding from Employment Support and Income Assistance, Department of Community Services to address period poverty. We received funding from the Office of Addictions and Mental Health for hygiene products, programming to combat social isolation, and sensory-based trauma kits. Lastly we received funding from the NS Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration for a summer student.

Throughout the fiscal year, the Centre had five projects running. Healthy Relationships for Youth – Making the Case, which was funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, finished its fifth and final year in September 2023. The Circles of Support and Change project wrapped up its fifth and final year in March 2024. The Antigonish/Guysborough Immigrant Support Program is funded by the NS Office of Immigration and provides supports to newcomers. The Law Foundation funds our outreach program, Justice Matters for Women. The Healthy Relationships for Youth program was funded by the Department of Justice – Crime Prevention and the Department of Community Services through the NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Jackie Jacques, Bookkeeper, and Cindy Doiron, Finance Manager

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE

SUBMITTED BY JACKIE JACQUES AND CINDY DOIRON



AWRCSASA FUNDING

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services rely on the support of our community and the generous commitment of foundations, various government departments, and private donors that fund our work.

DIRECT SERVICES ARE FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Nova Scotia Health
- DCS-Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Office of Addictions and Mental Health
- Community Donations

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Health

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN IS FUNDED BY:

- Law Foundation of Nova Scotia

ANTIGONISH/GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Office of Immigration

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS ARE FUNDED BY:

- Public Health Agency of Canada
- NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- NS Department of Justice- Crime Prevention

SUMMER STUDENT POSITION IS FUNDED BY:

- Nova Scotia Labour, Skills and Immigration

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to all individuals, organizations and businesses who value and support our work. Thank you to all who contribute to our direct mail campaign. We raised \$28,246.80 this year, which in turn touched the lives of many.

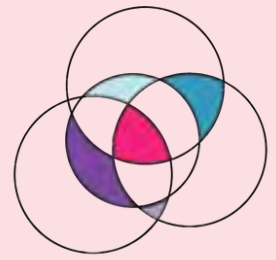
Special thanks to the following:

• Every Individual Donor

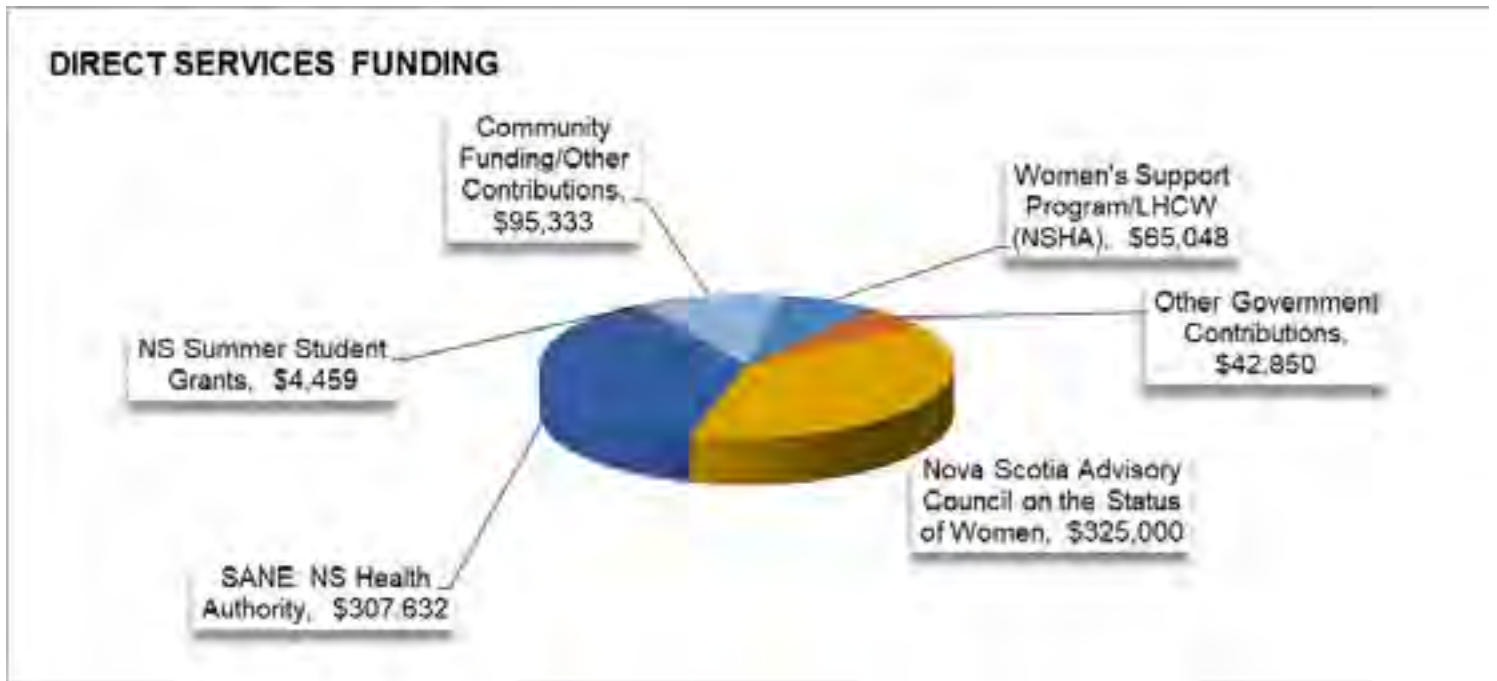
- Sisters of St. Martha
- Antigonish Kinsmen Club
- Unifor Social Justice Fund
- East Coast Credit Union

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE

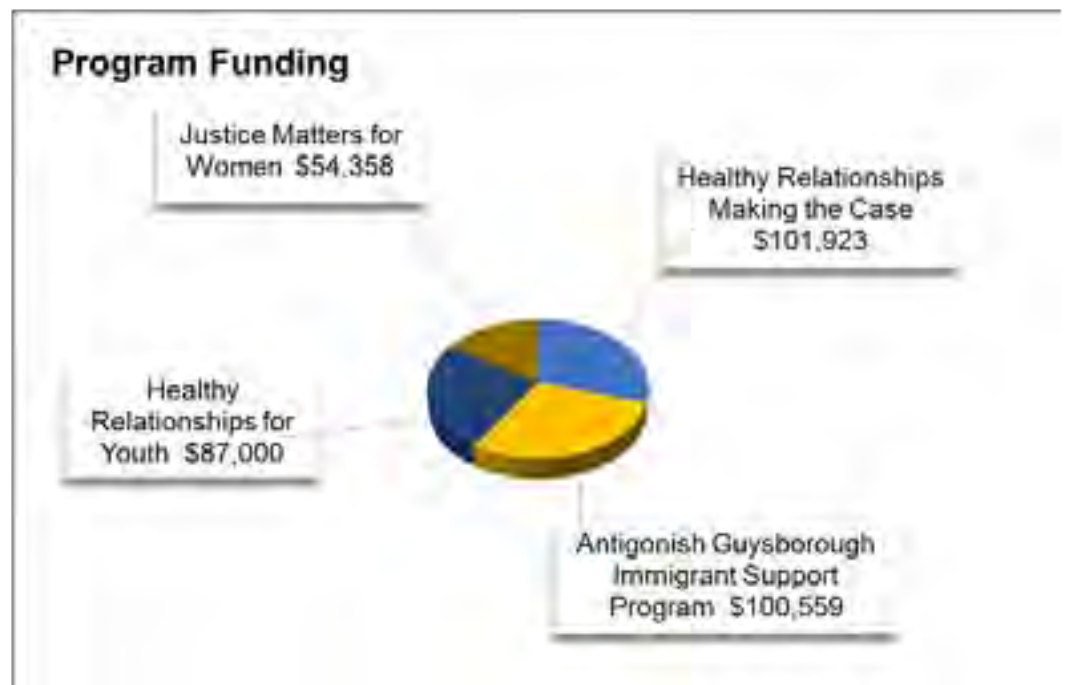
SUBMITTED BY JACKIE JACQUES AND CINDY DOIRON



\$840,322: Direct Service Funding for 23/24

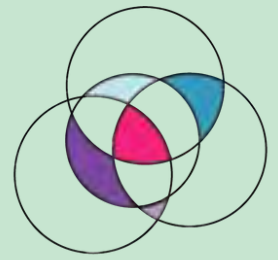


\$343,840: Program Funding for 23/24



WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



April 2023-March 2024

Throughout the 2023-24 fiscal year, Mica and Gisele met or spoke with individual women **547** times.

April: 51
May: 36
June: 65
July: 30
August: 36
September: 40
October: 41
November: 60
December: 39
January: 71
February: 38
March: 40

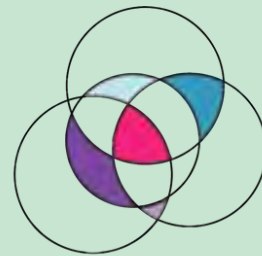
Highlights of Women's Support Work

In September Gisele had the opportunity to travel to Calgary for a Human Trafficking Conference. Throughout the two days Gisele was able to learn about human trafficking from individuals with lived experience and how law enforcement is working with individuals involved.



WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



AWCSAS-Administered Programs and Funds

Sisters of Saint Martha Poverty Relief Fund

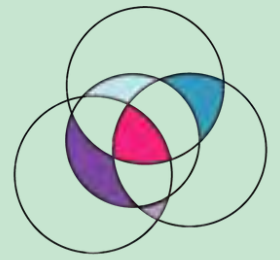
The Sisters of Saint Martha donated \$25,000 to the fund for the 2023-2024 year. Women were able to access emergency financial relief when presenting with financial hardship. Below is an outline of how the money was distributed from April 2023-March 2024:

- **In total 121 women received support from the fund this year.**
- 14 women received help with medical prescriptions or medical travel.
- 7 women received support with rental arrears or damage deposits.
- 20 women received support for heating assistance (oil or electric bills).
- 2 women received support for overdue phone bills.
- 72 women received support with grocery cards (\$100 each).
- 1 woman received support for an eye exam.
- 1 woman received support for new walking sneakers.
- 1 woman received support in purchasing a new answering machine.

In addition to the 121 women who received support throughout the fiscal year, the support workers were able to use some of the funds for a Holiday Luncheon and Valentine's Lunch for women within the community. It is apparent that poverty continues to be present for women in the Antigonish community as the costs of living continue to rise. This year we have seen an increase in the need for food security. The assistance from the Sisters of Saint Martha has provided women with heat, power, health needs, and shelter in times of financial crisis.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



AWCSAS-Administered Programs and Funds

Women's Support Fund

The Women's Support Fund is a donated fund available to women who are in a situation where they need assistance in making a change in their lives. It is available to women who are facing financial hardship. These funds were distributed the following way in 2023-2024:

- 1 woman was supported in sending her children to March Break camp in order to continue her education studies the week they were off.
- 6 women were supported in rental arrears.
- 1 woman was supported in buying a CPAP mask.
- 12 women were supported in heating assistance (oil or electric bills).
- 1 woman was supported in buying computer supplies.
- 2 women were supported with overdue phone bills.

Kinsmen Fund

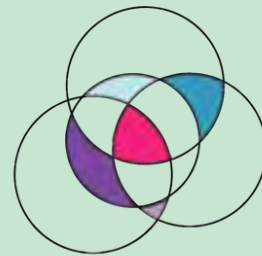
The Kinsmen Fund is made available to the AWRCASASA to help women in emergency financial situations. Through the Kinsmen's generous donation of \$1000 each month, women (and their families) are able to receive financial assistance toward an emergency bill payment (i.e. rent, heat, prevention of power disconnection), medical necessity, or food security. Throughout the 2023-2024 fiscal year, we administered \$9,890.34 on behalf of the Kinsmen. This year 39 women received assistance through the Kinsmen fund with the following emergency financial help:

- 15 emergency heat/power arrears/disconnection prevention
- 4 rent arrears/eviction prevention
- 8 phone/internet arrears
- 3 prescription/medication costs
- 3 for emergency dental work
- 4 for eye exam and prescription costs
- support with Christmas gifts for children

On behalf of the Women's Support Workers, we are so grateful to have access to this fund; financial assistance is a significant part of our work with women living in poverty, and every dollar truly helps relieve a piece of the financial burden women face when trying to make ends meet for their families.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



AWCSAS-Administered Programs and Funds

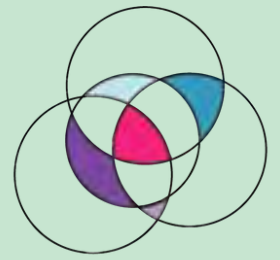
Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund: 2023-2024 Season

The Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund provides emergency support for people unable to afford to heat their homes. Funding for the AEF 2023-2024 season was provided through generous donations coming from the Sisters of St. Martha, the Town and County Councils, the Bergengren Credit Union, and other businesses and people in the community. The Fuel Fund application forms were made available through the AWCSASA as well as the Town and County Council offices. The AWCSASA accepted and reviewed applications from November 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024, and on behalf of the AEF board made recommendations for approval of emergency help. For the November 2023-April 2024 season, the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund assisted 203 families with approximately \$105,000 in home heating assistance. The vast majority of these families received \$560.00 in oil, or \$400.00 in power or propane, or 2 cords of wood. A handful of families were able to receive a little more in order to bring any outstanding arrears to a zero balance so they could start fresh and budget accordingly. There were 134 families from the county and 69 from the town who received heating assistance. In Antigonish county 60 families were assisted with oil, 52 with electric heat, 19 with wood, and 3 with propane. In Antigonish town, 20 families were assisted with oil, 47 with electric heat, and 2 with propane. Many people were referred to government and non-government programs for further assistance. Some points of interest with respect to the socioeconomic and demographics of the AEF families include these approximations:

- 27% rely on Income Assistance as their source of income.
- 33% are single parent families.
- 19% are seniors.
- 45% are families with children.
- 49% have either part-time or full-time employment, or are receiving EI.
- a significant number of applicants are living with chronic illness.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



Events

Christmas Luncheon

During the month of December we were able to host a Christmas Luncheon for some women in the community who may otherwise be alone during the holidays. We ordered a delicious spread from Lin's Chinese Restaurant, and each attendee was able to take home some leftovers. Each woman also received a gift basket with body care products and a \$100 gift card to Sobeys.



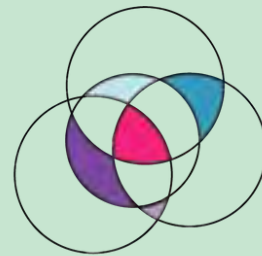
Valentine's Day Lunch

On February 14th the women's support workers organized a catered lunch for some of our extra special women to celebrate each other and hopefully relieve the social isolation and seasonal depression that can be at its height in the month of February.



WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



Community Partnerships and Committees

Nursing Tours

Gisele was able to provide 11 nursing tours for students throughout this fiscal year. During the tours, discussions took place regarding the rising costs of housing, food, and electric bills and how this directly impacts women's mental and physical health. A focus was on Income Assistance rates in the province and how this directly impacts and puts strain on the Health Care system due to the poverty rate.

Nourishing Communities: Market Money Program

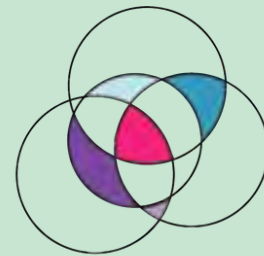
The AWRCSSASA once again collaborated with the Antigonish Farmer's Market Association to provide the Nourishing Families Program to women and families within the community. The nine-month program ran from April 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. Each month money was provided to selected families within the community to help offset the cost of food. The money can be used at any vendor within the market.

Committee Involvement

Mica represents the AWRCSSASA at monthly meetings of the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty. This year the coalition did some fantastic advocacy work around Guaranteed Basic Income and Food Security.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT WORKERS

SUBMITTED BY GISELE CARPENTER AND MICA FRANCIS



Challenges and Solutions

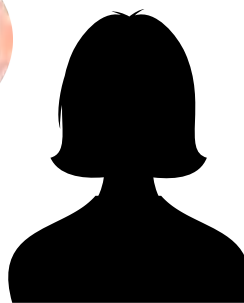
One of the biggest challenges identified by the Support Workers is addressing food insecurity. There are frequent requests by women for food vouchers or grocery cards. We are able to refer women to the local food bank, the community pantries, and soup kitchen events, and we are often able to make a financial contribution to their shelter costs (i.e. rent, power, heat) or phone bills so that they can in turn use that money towards groceries. Once in a while it becomes clear that food is the emergency, and we are able to provide a gift card for those individuals and families.

Another challenge is the increase of women seeking support for mental health-related concerns and the turnaround time for an appointment. It is not uncommon to have to wait 4-6 months for an appointment with a counsellor with Mental Health and Addictions at the hospital, and we have encountered a number of women who reach out to us because they have been told by their therapist that they need to seek specialized therapy for processing their trauma. This leads to AWRC Women's Support Workers filling in the gap until women can meet with a Mental Health Professional or begin the AWRC Trauma Therapy Program.

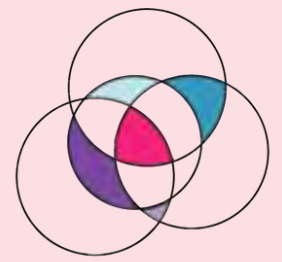
Hopes

We are looking forward to more women dropping in for coffee and conversation, which can often lead to some of them accessing our Direct Services and Programs. Our increased presence on social media has already resulted in new faces and increasing numbers of women visiting the Centre. We would also like to increase the programming that we can offer for women in the community and in our more remote rural areas.

I'm so grateful for the services at the Women's Centre. I don't know where I would have turned.



JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN



Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties

SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY



The Justice Matters for Women Program is a valued and respected service that provides legal information, support, and advocacy to rural women and adolescent girls. The Justice Matters for Women Program has a long history of helping women navigate barriers. This valued service is mitigating many of the challenges women and their families are experiencing post-covid.

Unprecedented issues with food insecurity, energy poverty, and housing are placing strain on many families and increasing incidents of family violence, mental health, and addiction. With the mounting uncertainty many women and their families are experiencing, the Justice Matters for Women program provides the stability and resources they greatly need.

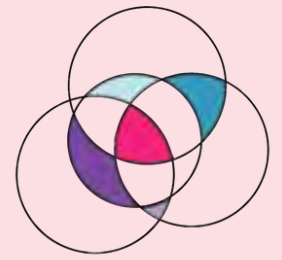
Program Objectives

The Justice Matters for Women Program extends the support services of the AWRCSASA to the communities of Canso, Guysborough, Sherbrooke, and Antigonish. The delivery of outreach support to rural communities allows women to access to legal information, advocacy, and resources in their home community. These supports help reduce and alleviate complex challenges women experience within a safe and secure environment.

An essential component of the Justice Matters for Women Program is community engagement and collaboration with other agencies. This ensures that women and adolescent girls have the necessary wrap-around supports to navigate challenges.

Public health restrictions have impacted the delivery of community legal information sessions in rural communities. The Outreach Worker has distributed legal information resources to seniors including the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia's booklet *It's In Your Hands*.

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN



Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties
SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY

Program Structure and Overview

Justice Matters for Women serves adolescent girls and women weekly in Guysborough and Canso, with Sherbrooke biweekly by appointments, through home visits and phone appointments. Phone support and advocacy is readily available to women accessing our toll-free number. Marcia Connolly serves the counties of Antigonish and Guysborough as Outreach Worker.

- **Guysborough:** Mondays (Mental Health & Addictions, Guysborough Memorial Hospital)
- **Antigonish:** Tuesdays (Antigonish Women's Resource Center)
- **Canso:** Wednesdays (Canso Medical Center)
- **Sherbrooke:** Appointment only

Issues Impacting Women in our Catchment Area

- Poverty and Lack of Services
- Navigating and Accessing Benefits
- Accessing Public Transit
- Affordable Housing

The Outreach worker can help with:

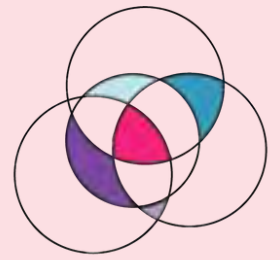
- Poverty
- Navigating the Justice System
- Information about entitlement and benefits (death benefit, child tax benefit, CPP, OAS, and GIS)
- Family law
- Mental health & addictions
- Employee rights
- Violence
- Bankruptcy & property repossession
- Housing & tenancy

"It was nice to have someone on the phone that kind of understood this for me.

I thank you very much."



JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN



Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties

SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY

The Justice Matters for Women program provided direct services and advocacy to **183** women between April 2023 and March 2024.

Legal Information Sessions:

May 24, 2023

Information session in Louisdale

Attendance: 45

Topic: **It's Your Business to Know Your Business** (importance of estate planning and preparation)

December 4, 2023

Information session at Fanning Education Centre, Canso

Attendance: 10 students

Topic: **Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants** (the lease process)

December 5, 2023

Information session at Chedabucto Education Centre, Guysborough

Attendance: 11 students

Topic: **Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants** (the lease process)

December 7, 2023

Information session at East Antigonish Education Centre, Monastery

Attendance: 22 students

Topic: **Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants** (the lease process)

January 24, 2024

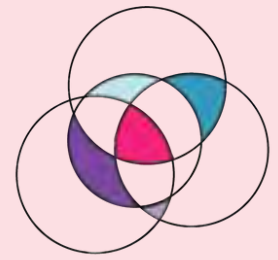
Information session at the People's Place Library, Antigonish

Attendance: 32

Topic: **Human Trafficking**

*This event was organized by the Antigonish Women's Center outreach worker, and was in partnership with ElevateHer, and the Elizabeth Fry Society.

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN



Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties

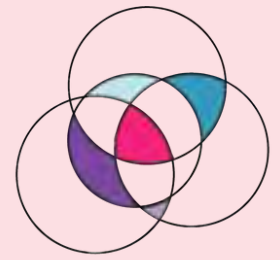
SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY

Community Collaboration

Guysborough County's geographical size and sparse population contribute to the barriers identified as challenging when accessing service. Community collaboration is instrumental for effective service delivery. It is working in partnership with other community stakeholders to assess need, identify challenges, and find strategies to reduce or mitigate those challenges. Community partners who refer women and adolescent girls to the Outreach Worker for information, advocacy, and support included the following:

- Nurse Practitioner, Family Practice Nurse, Guysborough Primary Health Care Center
- Mental Health and Addictions Services
- Nova Scotia Works
- Department of Community Services
- Physicians in Guysborough and Canso recommend and provide information about our services to women requiring advocacy, support, or legal information.
- Guysborough Adult Learning Association
- Guysborough Area Food Bank
- Hon. Greg Morrow Constituency Office
- Nova Scotia Provincial Housing recommends the services of the Outreach Worker to tenants needing support or advocacy
- Schools Plus provides information about the services offered through the Outreach Worker to parents, guardians, and adolescent girls
- Senior Social Worker, Seniors Health, and Palliative Program.
- Naomi Society
- A Roof Over Your Head
- Circles of Support and Change project
- Guysborough County Kids First
- Nova Scotia Early Childhood Intervention Program
- St. Francis Xavier University
- RCMP
- Clergy

JUSTICE MATTERS FOR WOMEN



Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties

SUBMITTED BY MARCIA CONNOLLY

Program Challenges and Response to Challenges

Many rural residents are experiencing unprecedented poverty, resulting in many being challenged with food and heating insecurity. Rural communities do not have access to grocery stores or gas stations and have to travel significant distances to purchase food and fuel. Travel and distance to medical appointments, pharmacies, and grocery stores contribute to the financial distress many have. The continued lack of the following services are challenging:

- rural internet
- cell-phone service
- affordable housing
- emergency room closures
- loss of physicians
- rural isolation
- mental health and addictions services
- poverty

The Outreach Worker responds to these challenges by meeting women in their community; she brings the information, accesses the resources, and advocates on their behalf.

Conclusion

The generous support of the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia provides rural women and adolescent girls the support they need to address and navigate complex issues in their community. The Justice Matters for Women program is recognized and valued as an essential program in rural communities. Women and their families are often impacted by economic disparity, social isolation, mental health, and violence. These issues often place them in vulnerable and precarious situations. The outreach service is viewed as a safe space while navigating life's challenges.

ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY ARIANNA COELLO



Wendy and I embarked on a remarkable journey this year as we initiated our positions at the Immigrant Support Program. Both of us were new to our roles, but with dedication, we dove headfirst into understanding the right ways of supporting our immigrant community. Initially, the learning curve was steep, but with each passing day, we gained invaluable insights into the responsibilities and challenges in our positions. We met with various service providers and organizations, realizing the importance of partnership in achieving our goals effectively. Through these collaborations, we broadened the scope of services we could offer, ensuring a more comprehensive support system for newcomers.

Over time, we witnessed a heartening transformation within the immigrant community we serve. As newcomers slowly got to know us and understand that we are here to help them, a sense of trust began to form. This trust has led to an increase in their participation and engagement with our program. Community events and our active presence on social media platforms have played crucial roles in fostering this sense of belonging and inclusivity. By creating a welcoming environment where "everyone is welcome," we have cultivated a vibrant community where newcomers feel supported, valued, and empowered to thrive in their new home. Through these efforts, meaningful relationships have been established, paving the way for a brighter future for all those we serve.

Challenges & Solutions

The ISP encountered numerous challenges when we first began our roles. One initial challenge was the fact that newcomers in the community were unfamiliar with us, making it difficult to establish trust. To address this, we proactively engaged with the community by hosting events and initiatives that allowed us to introduce ourselves and showcase the support services we offer. By stepping out of our office and into the community, we were able to bridge the gap and gradually build relationships with newcomers, fostering a sense of trust and familiarity.

Another obstacle we encountered was navigating the LaaMPS system, the platform through which we register clients and manage our services. Initially, we faced issues with the system and struggled to fully utilize its capabilities. However, through persistence and determination, we reached out to our service agreement for assistance. Despite initial challenges in communication, our service provider patiently met with us and clarified the intricacies of the system. They explained that recent staff changes had caused delays in communication but assured us of ongoing support. Armed with a better understanding of the system, we were able to streamline our processes and provide more efficient support to our clients.

ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY ARIANNA COELLO



One notable challenge we faced in our Immigrant Support Program was the difficulty of hosting events during typical working hours. Recognizing that many newcomers to our community were employed and unable to attend daytime events, we made the strategic decision to shift our event schedule to weekends. By making this adjustment, we aimed to ensure that all members of the immigrant community had equal access to our programs and services. This proactive approach not only accommodated the diverse schedules of our clients but also demonstrated our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. As a result, we have seen increased attendance and participation in our events, allowing us to better fulfill our mission of supporting and empowering immigrants in our community.



Lastly, our journey in the past year has been marked by a deep commitment to understanding and meeting the needs of immigrants in Antigonish. However, we acknowledge the challenge of providing adequate services to Guysborough, an area that has been underserved. Given our newness to the role, our initial focus was rightfully centered on grasping the expectations of the program, familiarizing ourselves with our roles, and comprehending the unique needs of immigrants in Antigonish. As we enter this new year, we recognize the imperative to expand our outreach efforts and ensure that immigrants in Guysborough receive the information and support they require. This forthcoming year will be dedicated to bridging the gap and extending our services to encompass the diverse needs of immigrants across the entire region, embodying our commitment to inclusivity and equitable support.



ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY ARIANNA COELLO



Hopes for the Year Ahead

As we embark on this new year, the ISP is filled with hope and anticipation for the growth and evolution of our program. It brings us joy to witness the program expanding and flourishing, as evidenced by the recent funding for an additional immigrant support worker. This development not only enhances the program's capacity to provide essential services, but also underscores our commitment to ensuring that newcomers receive the assistance and support they rightfully deserve. With this newfound flexibility, we envision the program forging even stronger partnerships with other service providers and organizations, creating a seamless network of support that comprehensively addresses the needs of immigrants in our community. In line with our vision for the future, we aspire to introduce innovative initiatives such as summer programs for newcomer children, recognizing the challenges they face in accessing existing summer camps due to waitlists and financial constraints. Additionally, we aim to establish a homework club tailored for older kids, equipping them with the necessary language skills and academic support as they prepare for higher education. We look forward to feedback from newcomers regarding our events and programming. We are eager to hear their thoughts and suggestions for improvement, as their insights are invaluable in shaping a more inclusive and effective support system. By actively listening to the voices of newcomers, we aim to tailor our initiatives to better meet their needs and aspirations, fostering a stronger sense of community and belonging for all. Ultimately, our overarching goal for this new year is to ensure that every newcomer is aware of the program's existence and feels confident in accessing the support system it provides. Through our unwavering dedication and hard work, we are optimistic that we can make this vision a tangible reality, empowering newcomers to thrive and succeed in their new home.



ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY ARIANNA COELLO



ANTIGONISH GUYSBOROUGH IMMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAM

SUBMITTED BY ARIANNA COELLO



Individuals Supported: 162

Families Supported: 34

Services provided:

- Settlement Plans
- Work Permit Applications
- Status Change Applications
- LMIA
- Citizenship Applications
- Dental Benefits
- Income Assistance Forms
- Presentations about the Program
- Accompanied clients to meetings with other service providers
- Heating Rebates
- Rent Subsidies
- Emotional Support
- Advocacy
- Joined and hosted meetings with other service providers and organizations to plan partnerships and how to best support newcomers

Community Events

- Family Day Party
- Girls' Magic Corner Summer Program
- International Potluck
- Hot Chocolate Event
- Friends & Family Holiday Photo shoot
- "Newcomers' Guide to Antigonish: Community, Culture, and Mental Wellness" booklet launch
- Valentine's Day card making
- Self-Esteem workshop
- Easter Bunny Bash

LINDSAY'S HEALTH CENTRE FOR WOMEN



SUBMITTED BY RICHELLE MACLAUGHLIN

This year, like for anyone in healthcare, has been increasingly busy. Staff, along with support from the Centre, have been managing and making changes to help support the ever-changing environment.

We have had some challenges with staffing replacements which has created its own set of dynamics logistically to best serve our patients/clients. Our usual staff compliment for providers on our Thursday Clinic day is 2.5 FTE. (1 Doctor, 1 Nurse Practitioner and 1 part-time Mental Health Clinician), with a Medical Receptionist supporting the clinic 16 hours/week.

In September 2023 our Mental Health Clinician, who worked Thursday afternoons in the clinic, started her maternity leave and is taking the full 18 months. Unfortunately the position was never filled for our clinic time with her replacement. In October 2023 our Nurse Practitioner also moved on to a new position within NSHA. At that time we were informed that the NP replacing her would be starting in our clinic at the end of November. That timeline has been moved multiple times, and currently we have no confirmed arrival for replacement. So at this point we have 1 FTE providing care to a client base of 2.5 FTEs.

Currently our Doctor is providing services on Thursdays, our regular clinic day, as well as some appointments on Wednesday afternoons, mostly mental health support visits. We are very fortunate to have Dr. MacLean's expertise in not just primary care, but also in mental health with her training. The pressure from this is felt by our patients who are waiting much longer for appointment times and also our staff who are "juggling" within the present situation.

Our patients will always be our number one priority and the best way to support them is with a holistic approach. We will continue to strive for balance and efficiency to provide the best care possible for those using our services, and we hope that 2024 will provide us the opportunity to retain our full compliment of providers.

- Total Clinic Visits Booked: 1330
- Actual Clinic Visits attended: 1078
- Community Visits: 315
- Cancellations: 163
- No Shows: 41*

*Every cancellation spot was successfully filled with another appointment. When cancellations occurred due to weather or something out of the clinic's control, every patient was rebooked. No Shows are the reflection of actual time "not filled".



SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



SUBMITTED BY PAMELA REYES RN, MSN, CPMHN(C), SANE-A
AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM MANAGER

INTRODUCTION

In Nova Scotia, we continue to be faced with what seem to be inconceivably high rates of sexualized violence in our communities. Over the last few years in this province, we have encountered many challenges, including Covid-19 and Canada's largest mass shooting, which resulted in a review and report by the Mass Casualty Commission. These traumatic events have resulted in high levels of stress, hypervigilance, and fear for many Nova Scotians in all areas of life. It is highly likely that there has been an increase in violence in our communities as a result of the pandemic and the social, economic, and health impacts one would expect that a pandemic would bring. Increased stress and restrictions to societal and social functioning lead to increased incidences of emotional, physical, and sexual violence and assault. Although we know that many victims will not access a SANE program, in our catchment we continue to build connections within the community to foster a safe, supportive, and non-judgmental environment where victims can come for support and guidance. We are proud to be able to provide specialized, compassionate, trauma-informed, and culturally-sensitive care to those who have experienced sexual violence. Each and every year our SANE program is presented with opportunities for growth and change. This year has been no different, at both the community and provincial levels.

At the program level, the program staffing model proposed and piloted in 2017, which made the SANE site coordinator position permanent, has continued successfully with the last hire in February 2022. As a result of this staffing model change, the SANE program manager is no longer working in isolation and works fewer overtime hours, which has led to improved workplace balance. This has also ensured that we can continue to be responsive to the needs of our contract staff, patients, and community in a more sustainable and timely way. We have recruited new SANEs in an effort to balance our staffing needs. While a number of SANEs continue to require leaves for personal reasons, the effects of the pandemic continue to impact the everyday functions of the program manager; the program manager was tasked with completing more of the day-to-day program operation functions in addition to the community outreach work, all while operating during continued Covid restrictions. While this has made for unique challenges, the SANE program consistently continued to support team members in providing care to survivors utilizing the program, access to professional development, continuing education opportunities, and memberships to professional associations.

As we rebuild our community relationships and continue to recover from the direct impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the SANE program remains invested in community initiatives and continues to strive to work with community stakeholders to reignite the working relationships and support to all the programs. We saw this with the restart of ASART in January 2024 and the expansion of stakeholders invited to this table. .

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Provincially, the SANE program manager assisted in the skills training of new teams of SANE nurses in all regions by attending the provincial skills labs. We have also worked collaboratively as SANE program coordinators/managers to attempt to inform provincial policy and have demonstrated our capacity for flexibility and adaptability as we work to change existing policy, standards, and practice to create a more consistency in practice across the province

The SANE program continues to work closely with a variety of local, regional, and provincial stakeholders to educate, collaborate with, and build the capacity of our communities, region, and province. The SANE program engaged in numerous outreach and information sessions on SANE and consent, attended events representing the AWRC SANE program at various institutions, and collaborated with AWRC staff to promote and increase awareness through social media presence. We are proud of the contributions we have made in improving the local, regional, and provincial response to survivors of sexual violence in Nova Scotia; as we expand the SANE response portfolio to include Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence, we look forward to continuing engagement with our communities to further develop and adapt to meet the needs of individuals, stakeholders, and communities for the 2024-2025 year.

AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The AWRCSASA SANE Program was established in 2007. It is a community-based program of the AWRCSASA delivered in partnership with Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and Student Services at St. Francis Xavier University (St FX). The AWRCSASA adapted the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre SANE program model as their service delivery model to most effectively provide the essential services required to address the short-term and longer-term needs of victims of sexual assault within our catchment areas of Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough, and Richmond counties. In this model, specially trained registered nurses (sexual assault nurse examiners) provide on-call, immediate medical-forensic care. The AWRCSASA is responsible for the administration and coordination of the program.

The SANE Program is a “client centred” care model, where the victim/survivor directs all aspects of her/his care. The victim/survivor is given medical and legal options for treatment, as well as follow-up options. Specialized medical-forensic services are provided in a safe, supportive, culturally safe, non-judgmental, and confidential environment to individuals of all genders who are post-pubescent (approximately 13 years of age and older).AWRCSASA SANE exam sites include Lindsay’s Health Centre for Women in Antigonish, St. Martha’s Regional Hospital in Antigonish, Strait Richmond Hospital in Evanston, the St. Francis Xavier Health Centre in Antigonish, the Aberdeen Hospital in New Glasgow, and the Guysborough Memorial Hospital in Guysborough. Our two community sites are currently paused pending updated contracts (i.e. MOU’s) as we are awaiting receipt of the updated contracts from NSH.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM MANAGER



The SANE Program provides many specialized services to sexual assault victims/survivors, including:

- Emergent medical & forensic response--24 hours/day, 7 days/week to exam sites listed
- Supportive follow-up care for victims/survivors
- Expert testimony in a court of law
- Storage of forensic evidence for at least six months (longer as needed)

Along with overseeing the provision and delivery of program services, the SANE Manager is responsible for the professional development of the SANEs, as well as development and facilitation of community awareness and education on sexual assault and the SANE program (which is discussed further in this report). Typically, the part-time SANE Site Coordinator works in collaboration with the program manager with the delivery of the SANE program and services. For 2023-2024, one of the SANEs, Kyla Neary-Griffiths, was hired while Pamela was on an unpaid leave to support the ongoing outreach and information session work.

The SANE Program Manager is chair of the Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART) and a member of the Pictou Sexual Assault Response Team (PSART). These groups typically meet quarterly for the purpose of working towards awareness of sexualized violence in our community, improved responses to sexual assault in our community, and providing better services for survivors. ASART restarted their committee in January 2024 with ongoing meetings scheduled annually for January, May, and September.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

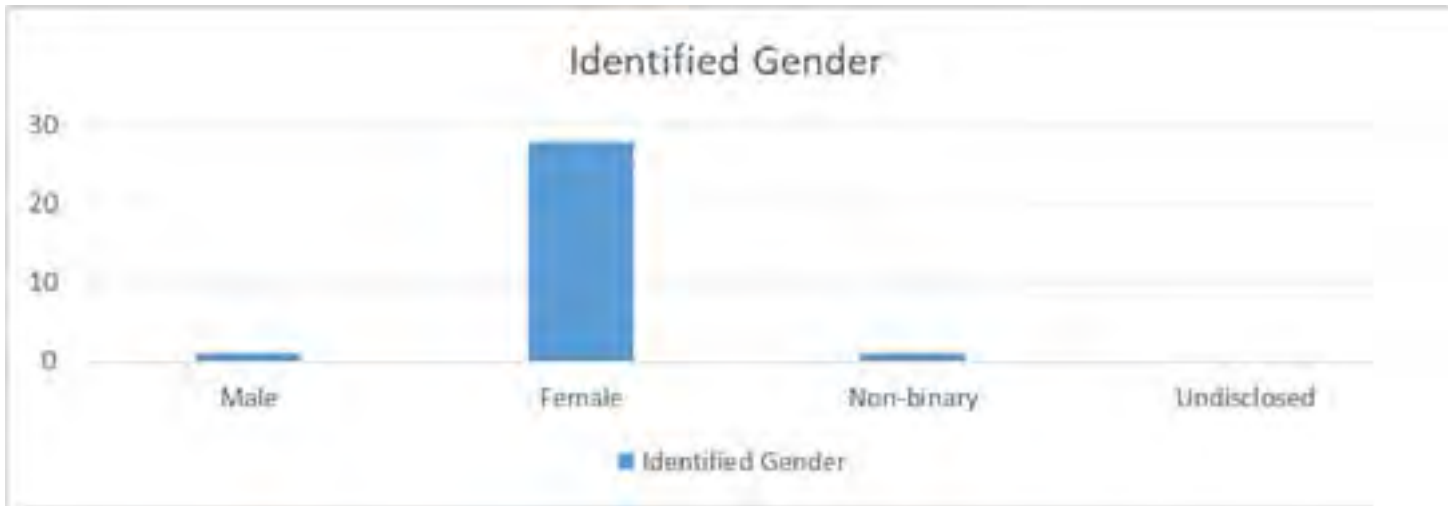


SUBMITTED BY PAMELA REYES RN, MSN, CPMHN(C), SANE-A
AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM MANAGER

AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM USAGE

2023-2024 marks the 17th year of the Antigonish SANE program. The program provided medical-forensic support and care to 30 victims/survivors of sexualized violence. There were a total of 18 info calls during the year regarding a variety of requests including follow up information, kit handovers, services available, locations, and individual specific items (i.e. services for prepubescent individuals). The info calls occurred from August 2023 thru February 2024.

There were no cases during the month of January 2024. Cases were distributed as follow in 2023: April: 4, May: 1, June: 2, July: 3, August: 3, September: 5, October: 4, November: 2, December: 2, and in 2024: February: 3, March: 1. While there is slight variation in the monthly totals, overall, this is similar to the case numbers from the 2022-2023 year.



28 individuals identified as female; 1 identified as male; 1 identified as non-binary. The majority of clients were between the ages of 17-25 (n=15); this was also the largest age group seen last year. Six were between the ages of 13-16 (which is an increase in this population from last year, which was 0); three were between the ages of 26-40; six were between the ages of 41-65; there zero individuals greater than 65 years of age. Overall, this is a similar distribution to last year.

The majority of assaults took place over the weekend, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (n=22 total over these days). Friday had the most number of reported assaults (n=8), with Saturday and Sunday next at seven each (n=7). There was one case where the individual was with the individual for more than one day, with Sunday as the originating day. Late summer and early fall 2023 were the busiest times with three cases in July, three cases in August, five cases in September, and four cases in October.

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Cases by Zone

Northern Zone: Aberdeen Hospital: 13 cases (increased from 9 last year)

Eastern Zone: St Martha's Regional Hospital: 16 cases (decreased from 19 last's year)

Strait Richmond Hospital: 1 case (decreased from 2 last year)

*There were no cases at St FX Health and Counseling Centre or Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (this is due to community sites being closed for the majority of the year). There were no cases at Guysborough Memorial Hospital.



Looking at the trends from previous years, the number of cases responded to are similar to last year; this corresponds with the easing of restrictions from the pandemic and recovery from Covid-19. In 2022-2023 SANE responded to 30 cases; 2021-2022 SANE responded to 20 cases; in 2020-2021 SANE responded to 28 cases, in 2019-20 SANE responded to 37 cases, in 2018-19 SANE responded to 33 cases, and in 2017-18 SANE responded to 28 cases. This year, the majority of the cases were at SMRH. Unfortunately, it is unknown how many cases could have been completed at community based-sites and whether the lack of accessibility prevented individuals from seeking treatment by the SANE team. The goal is for these sites to be re-opened during the 2024-2025 year. The AWRC SANE program continues to advocate to Nova Scotia Health for the reopening of previous community sites along with addition of new community sites.

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The majority of cases were initiated by emergency departments. In some cases, the police initiated contact, or the survivor or a friend reached out to the toll-free 24/7 response directly. A total of 23 sexual assault examination kits (SAEKs) were collected. Of these 23 kits, 11 kits were handed over to police; that equates to approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ (48%) of all kits collected were handed over to police. This is a decrease from last year where 16 of 24 (66%) kits were handed to police. Historically, in 2020-2021 seven kits were handed over to police, in 2019-2020 six kits were handed over immediately, in 2018-19 eleven kits were handed over, and in 2017-18, twelve kits were immediately handed over. Of the 23 kits collected in 2022-2023, 12 kits remain frozen at this time.

For 2023-2024, 36% of all cases were reported to police with the kits handed over. This is lower than the previous year when 53% of the cases (n=16) were reported to police with kits handed over. Overall, although there was a decline in the past year, the trend in numbers may indicate that people are more likely to report in very recent years as compared to previously when the percentage of cases reported to police had been trending down from previous years of 55% of cases reported in 2021-2022, 46% in 2020-2021, 44% in 2019-2020, 55% in 2018-19, and 76% in 2017-18. Ongoing awareness and education with community policing partners may be helpful in shifting public perceptions on the justice system.

In 14 of the cases, the assailant was known to the survivor for greater than 24 hours. In 2 of the cases, the assailant(s) was known to the survivor for less than 24 hours. In 13 of the cases, the assailant(s) was unknown to the survivor. One case involved 2 assailants, where 1 was known and 1 was unknown. In 27 of the cases, the perpetrator(s) were identified as male; in one case the perpetrator was unknown. There was one assailant identified in 24 cases; there were 2 assailants identified in two cases, 3 assailants identified in one case, and 8 assailants identified in two cases. In one case the number of assailants was unknown.

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In fourteen (14) of the cases, the assailant was known to the survivor for greater than 24 hours. In two (2) of the cases, the assailant(s) was known to the survivor for less than 24 hours. In thirteen (13) of the cases, the assailant(s) was unknown to the survivor. One (1) case involved 2 assailants where 1 was known and 1 was unknown. In twenty-seven (27) of the cases, the perpetrator(s) were identified as male; in one case the perpetrator was unknown. There was one assailant identified in 24 cases; there were two (2) assailants identified in two cases, three (3) assailants identified in one case, and eight (8) assailants identified in two cases. In one case the number of assailants was unknown.

The SANE program also receives calls to the 24/7 toll free response line and to the office that do not necessarily result in the need for acute SANE response. During the fiscal year, the program received thirty (30) info calls that resulted in an acute SANE response and eighteen (18) additional info calls that did not result in an acute SANE response for a total of forty-eight (48) info calls. Of the 18 calls that did not result in acute SANE response, the majority were from individuals looking for therapeutic support around historical assaults or sexual assaults that were greater than 120 hours ago; in these calls, support and appropriate information and resources were given to those individuals. A number of info calls were from survivors or police following up on previous cases.

The SANE program also receives calls to the 24/7 toll free response line and to the office that do not necessarily result in the need for acute SANE response. During the fiscal year, the program received thirty (30) info calls that resulted in an acute SANE response and eighteen (18) additional info calls that did not result in an acute SANE response for a total of forty-eight (48) info calls. Of the 18 calls that did not result in acute SANE response, the majority were from individuals looking for therapeutic support around historical assaults or sexual assaults that were greater than 120 hours ago; in these calls, support and appropriate information and resources were given to those individuals. A number of info calls were from survivors or police following up on previous cases.

Four (4) of the nurses within the SANE program received subpoenas for 2 different court hearings requesting testimony (one hearing in Port Hawkesbury and one hearing in Antigonish). This was similar to last year, although remains an overall decrease from previous years in the number of SANE's being utilized in the courtrooms for testimony; this is likely due to courts recovering from closures and delays due to previous Covid restrictions. As an outside and objective service, the SANE program is not provided with information on the progress or outcome of case investigations.

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A self-addressed, stamped envelope containing an evaluation of SANE services form is given to each survivor after services have been provided. This year, one evaluation was returned to the program. Respondents are asked to rate the services based on a number of attributes on a scale from 1 to 4. 1 being, unsatisfactory, not supported or unclear and 4 being very satisfied, well supported and very clear. Feedback provided on the evaluation included rankings of one 3 (regarding clarity of explanation on the examination process) and the remainder all 4s (out of 4); comments were that the SANEs were “very respectful and made me feel comfortable” and “...no complaints. They listened to what I had to say...”. One of the goals for the 2024-2025 year is to improve feedback response by creating a digital option for individuals to provide anonymous feedback.

We continue to receive feedback informally from the clients and family members that SANE provides services to, and from other service providers and community organizations. This feedback is always positive and reinforces the value and importance of this service in our communities. Often, individuals share comments regarding the lack of awareness of the program and what the SANE program offers to people. This further emphasizes the importance of the community outreach work, committees, and information sessions to increase awareness and understanding of the SANE program.

Under-reporting of Sexual Assaults

There is an assumption that more sexual assaults are taking place in Antigonish and surrounding areas that are not reported or disclosed to SANE based on the data from Stats Canada on the numbers of reported cases and the assumption that 9 in 10 sexual assaults go unreported. Fear, systemic barriers, systemic oppression, lack of awareness of resources, and social stigma continue to keep people who have experienced sexual violence from coming forward. It is essential that SANE continues efforts to inform the general public and local agencies about sexualized violence, the SANE program, and how to access services from SANE. During 2023-2024, we have continued to rebuild and enhance community partnerships; we plan to continue to work with community partners to improve relationships and communication. With emerging research showing the impact of Covid-19 on violence, we have continued to explore and develop strategies for expanding the role of SANE in response to domestic violence situations from a provincial perspective. Locally, the Antigonish SANE Manager completed the IAFN IPVNE certificate course for education and has started developing AWRC SANE-DV specific policies. The expansion of the SANE role to include domestic violence response aligns with many of the recommendations from the recent Mass Casualty Commission and other recent cases involving domestic violence and lack of resources or providers. The target date for AWRC SANE-DV rollout is July 1, 2024.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM MANAGER

SANE Program Staff

This year the program continued to have the SANE Manager position and part-time Coordinator role; KariLee Chisholm-MacDonald was hired as the Site Coordinator in February 2022. KariLee has assisted with maintaining response sites and supplies, scheduling, and supporting the SANE program as needed. Pamela Reyes, RN, SANE-A, has been in the SANE Manager position since July 2020. Since January 2023, Pamela was on a leave of absence from the full-time role working in a part-time capacity only. As a result, KariLee, Felicia Felix-MacDonald, and Kyla Neary-Griffiths worked with Pamela to create an effective and comprehensive team approach to supporting the SANE team and program while Pamela was on leave through the end of 2023. Pamela returned to the Program Manager role full time in January 2024. We are immensely appreciative to KariLee, Felicia, Kyla, and all of the SANEs during this time.

SANE program Contract Nurses, Training and Support

In order to maintain 24/7 on-call service provision to victims of sexual assault, a roster of at least 14 independently contracted SANE nurses is ideal. Our roster this year fluctuated from 10-14 SANEs. We are currently operating with 15 nurses on the roster, with one nurse currently on a LOA. A "back-up plan" policy was created in March 2015 outlining the appropriate action for SANEs to take if there is not a secondary SANE on call, and if the primary SANE cannot reach the secondary SANE nurse to respond to a case. In 2023-2024, we had no vacant shifts where we were unable to provide any SANE response.

Throughout the year, we had 2 nurses who took a leave of absence at various times and two nurses who resigned for personal reasons. The fluctuations in SANE availability led to the hiring of 1 nurse in January 2024 and 3 nurses in March 2024. They have been added to the roster, which will bring the total number of SANEs on staff to 14 (including the program manager). There is a plan to increase the SANE roster by fall 2024 by hiring in early summer 2024, noting that the potential addition of a DV response may cause attrition within the team.

A number of nurses also require speculum training to complete their training. We were fortunate to have Dr. Vaughn Marshall support the training of our SANEs through his office; each nurse will be offered up to a 4 hour time block to shadow and complete speculum exams. As of March 30, 2024, there are 4 nurses who need to schedule speculum training with Dr. Marshall.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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Monthly Education, Professional Development, and Debriefing Sessions

Debriefing is an important component of the monthly SANE meetings. All cases are reviewed and discussed each month, allowing the SANEs the opportunity to debrief among peers and to learn from one another's experiences. SANEs are encouraged to meet with the manager or coordinator for debriefing and to use the AWRCSASA services, such as the therapist, as needed.

SANEs participate in continuous learning through monthly training sessions and, when available, through specialized training opportunities. Continuing education is important for the nurses to stay connected to their role and to be able to respond to sexual assault cases with the appropriate knowledge and analysis to provide the best care possible.

Over the year, the SANE nurses received ongoing education in the following areas:

Skill Development and Maintenance

- Various webinars, e-learning, and journal articles for review
- IAFN Conference
- Provincial SANE Training (offered to new SANEs and current SANEs when spaces available)
- In-person presentation with Naomi Society, Sexual Violence Prevention Response Advocate from St FX, Human Trafficking by ElevateHer
- Vicarious trauma, wellness, and mindfulness activities

The Program Manager was able to participate in the above opportunities as well as:

- Academy of Forensic Nursing monthly meetings and webinars (virtual)
- International Association of Forensic Nursing webinars (virtual)
- Human Trafficking Summit (virtual)
- Michelle LeBrun Workshop
- Learning Network Webinars
- IAFN Annual Conference, Fall 2023

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

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IAFN conference

When possible, it is a priority for the AWRCSASA SANE Program Manager and at least one other SANE to attend the annual International Association of Forensic Nursing Practice conference, as well as other conferences relevant to the program. These conferences not only enable SANE staff to access specialized information and education from world renowned experts, they are a great networking opportunity. In fall 2023, we were able to send two nurses to the IAFN conference in Phoenix. Pamela and Cassandra Quik (SANE) were able to attend the conference in its entirety. Highlights included case presentations, discussion panels, presentations on trauma, DV, assessment skill building, and collaborative networking with peers across Canada, the US, and South Africa.

During the conference, Pamela attended a workshop session specifically on Human Trafficking Advocacy and Education. Following the workshop, Pamela began conversations with the chair of their human trafficking committee about developing education specific to Canadian healthcare providers. Conversations and meetings are ongoing regarding the development of a Canadian specific option for this education.

Working with St. Francis Xavier University

Every September, approximately 4000-5000 young adults move to the Antigonish area to attend the university. Even though the SANE program has seen a reduction in the number of students seeking our services, we also acknowledge there has been an increase in the number of historical disclosures from students reporting sexualized violence. We continue to invite and engage with our partners at St FX to increase awareness of the SANE program. Examples include collaboration project meetings, St FX representation on ASART, and outreach work through presentations.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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Community Education/Engagement

Community education about sexual violence prevention and awareness are key activities of the SANE Program, and we welcome opportunities to raise awareness throughout the community.

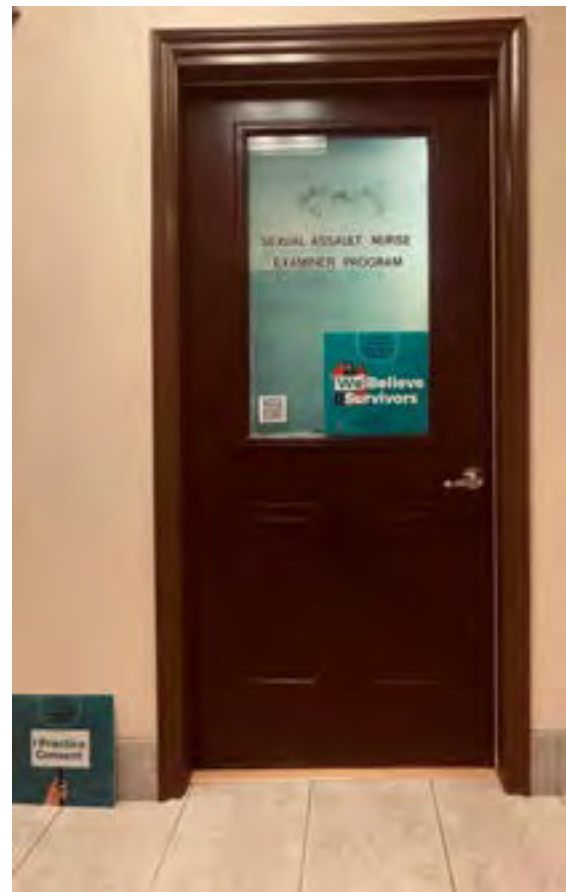
Information about the SANE Program is located throughout the area we serve in doctors' offices, the Paqtnkek Health Centre, hospital emergency rooms, Youth Health Centres, Public Health Services, Kids First, Leaside Transition House, Tearmann House, Strait Area Women's Place, and the St FX Health and Counselling Centre. Information on how to access SANE services is available by calling *811, *211, and the Kids Help Phone.

Over the year, the SANE program delivered or participated in the following presentations:

SAAM virtual presentation on SANE with Pictou County Women's Centre; numerous information sessions on SANE to St FX, RCMP, municipal police services, NSCC, rural emergency departments, and local doctors offices; and provincial SANE training in conjunction with Nova Scotia Health.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

For 2023, the SAAM events included online webinars and daily infographics on consent and sexualized violence. The goal is to expand presence and outreach work for SAAM in April 2024.



SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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SANE Program Expansion in Nova Scotia and Provincial Coordination

The SANE program works in collaboration with, and partakes in, resource and information sharing with the SANE Coordinators at Avalon, Tri-County Women's Centre, Every Women's Place, and in the Northern zone with the VON SANE team. This partnership has been extremely beneficial to all in how we support each other, and it helps to create cohesiveness among the programs and standardization of SANE services provincially.

One focus from a provincial perspective was training of new SANEs. The didactic portion of the training will continue to be held in Truro as the most central location, with the skills lab being completed at Dalhousie University. The past provincial SANE lead, Susan Wilson, and the current SANE Professional Practice Leader, Carol Rock-Altenhof, coordinated and facilitated the didactic and skills training days. In February 2024 a Provincial SANE Educator with NSH was hired and will be facilitating future trainings. NSH requested that all coordinators be expected to attend and support the provincial trainings. Pamela was able to attend the spring and fall 2023 skills lab sessions in Halifax and will be attending the spring 2024 didactic and skills sessions.

Pamela had the opportunity to present on the following sessions during the trainings:

- (Lecture) Genital Exam - female, male, and trans considerations and evidence collection
- (Lecture/Demo) Evidence collection and the SAEK
- Skills demo
- Simulation supervision

Highlights of provincial coordination and SANE expansion:

The provincial SANE Professional Practice Leader continues to host monthly teleconferences with all of the SANE program coordinators/managers. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss challenges, successes and to provide program and provincial updates. NSH drafted a provincial standard operating procedure for emergency departments across the province. The policy went live in January 2020. This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of healthcare professionals when patients disclose recent sexual assault in the ED setting. The document was drafted for EDs with and without access to SANE programs. Provincial Domestic Violence response by SANE continues with training for AWRC SANE to begin in May 2024 with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2024. NSH has announced plans for further expansion of SANE response to include Human Trafficking and Strangulation in 2025.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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Working with Police and Criminal Justice System

As we recover from the restrictions and effects of Covid, we have been able to relaunch the Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART) committee. The committee met in February 2024, with plans to meet in January, May, and September annually. This committee supports collaboration, information sharing, and education opportunities for everyone involved.

We continue to engage with our local police and justice partners through the provision of education sessions for SANE members. Specifically, we have had sessions from RCMP on DFSA and photography as well as a scheduled session on court processes and testimony. The AWRC SANE program continues to engage our partners by offering information sessions to increase awareness of the SANE program and services.

SANE Program Committee Work

The SANE Program Manager sits on committees related to the work of the SANE program where she shares information and is involved in and learns about community needs.

Currently, Pamela is participating in the following committees or working groups:

- Pictou Sexual Assault Response Team (PSART) – meets quarterly to work towards improving responses to survivors of sexual violence and includes members from a variety of disciplines and organizations.
- Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART) Chair – relaunch in February 2024 to meet three times annually; works to improve responses to survivors of sexual violence through information sharing and collaboration.
- AWRC OH&S committee member – meets regularly or as needed to address any occupational or safety concerns in the workplace.

Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART)

Pamela Reyes, the current SANE manager, serves as the Chair of the Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team. ASART members invited to join the committee include the RCMP – Antigonish Detachment, Antigonish Crown Attorney's Office, the AWRCSASA, NS Department of Justice Victim Services, St. Francis Xavier University Health and Counselling Centre, St. Francis Xavier University Director of Student Life, Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia, the Emergency Department of St. Martha's Regional Hospital, the Naomi Society, Paqtnkek Community Health Centre, and Schools Plus representatives.

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM



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AWRCSASA SANE PROGRAM MANAGER

2024-2025 Goals

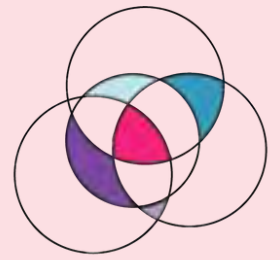
- Increase recruitment and retention within the AWRC SANE program
- Connect with community partners/stakeholders to develop and promote collaborative partnerships with SANE/AWRC with a focus on sexualized violence, IPV, human trafficking (ex. Sexual Assault Awareness Month, ASART meeting, PSART, youth center, StFX education sessions)
- Increase awareness of the SANE program and sexualized violence
- Assist with facilitation of provincial SANE training
- Liaise with NSH to re-open previously existing and new community sites to increase survivor accessibility to SANE services
- Continue to develop and review AWRC SANE program policy, protocols, and continuing education related to sexual assault and domestic violence.
- Review and develop improved QA/QI strategies to support team in delivering trauma- and violence-informed care based on best standards of practice.
- Engage SANE team members in developing their role as SANEs (ex. SANE-A exam preparation, opportunities to assist with provincial training, conferences, education/webinars).

Conclusion

In 2023-2024, the SANE program continued to provide leadership, advocacy, guidance, education, and support to agencies and service providers across the province working to improve access to specialized services for Nova Scotians impacted by sexual violence, and began to rebuild connections to community partners as we navigate the societal effects of Covid-19. The work by SANE in providing education and awareness-raising initiatives throughout the province has increased the visibility of the SANE program and the model for service delivery within a rural context. Our dedication to violence prevention through targeted education around SANE resources, healthy relationships, and consent with youth and young adults has created opportunity for enhanced dialogue to better understand the lived experiences of Nova Scotian youth and young adults, while building trust and awareness within our communities. Our commitment to investing in education, training and equipment for our SANEs ensures that those individuals accessing our program will have access to a competent, trauma-informed, culturally safe, dedicated team of highly skilled nurses. All of this work demonstrates our ongoing commitment to meeting our goal of ensuring all Nova Scotians who have been impacted by sexual violence have access to supports that are accessible, trauma-informed, culturally safe, non-judgmental, and empowering care to survivors and their families.

TRAUMA THERAPY

SUBMITTED BY TERRI PITTS



Total Sessions: 375

Age Range of Clients: 20-68

New Referrals: 58

Waitlist: 10

(Waitlist is capped at 10)

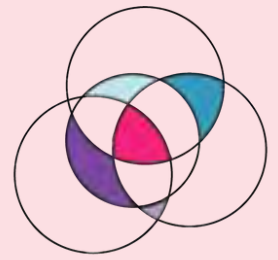


Professional Development

- Obtained a Certificate of Completion for EMDR after completing the required hours of practice and supervision.
- Completed a 4-day training in Supervision at Acadia University and joined the list of supervisors for the Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists.
- Completed an online training in Basic Principles of Somatic Experiencing.
- Attended a 4-day workshop with Michelle LeBrun on trauma.
- Attended a forum titled, “Connecting the Dots between Poverty and Health” facilitated by NSH.

TRAUMA THERAPY

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Early in 2023, the trauma therapy program moved to Avalon Sexual Assault Centre in Halifax, and Terri became an employee of Avalon. She continued to meet with clients at the AWRC due to a partnership agreement. After some challenges arose with centralizing the therapy program, Terri returned to AWRC in early August.

A trauma group was facilitated in 2023 at the Antigonish office that included psychoeducation on the impacts of trauma, emotional regulation, wellness, and self-compassion. Terri met with women for four sessions at the library in Canso on trauma where psychoeducation was provided and rich conversations were had with the members regarding their own experiences. Hopefully, more trauma groups will be offered in the future. However, with the demand for individual therapy so high, it is difficult to prioritize groups.

We began holding a 30-minute Friday afternoon debrief at the end of the AWRC workday that provides space for staff to come together and discuss anything they are holding from the week and to be offered support.

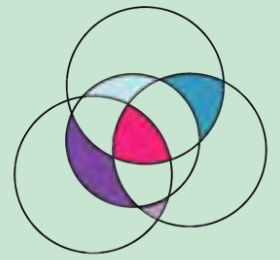
Challenges and Solutions

An ongoing challenge with the therapy program is the demand for services. The waitlist is now being capped at 10 in an attempt to ensure people are not waiting for lengthy periods of time or hopeful that they will be seen sooner. Those who contact the therapist when the list is full are encouraged to keep reaching out to inquire if a spot is available. Also, they are invited to have a conversation with the therapist within the week of contact, and they are offered resources to help manage what they are currently struggling with and other supports they could connect to until they are able to access therapy.

Hopes for the Year Ahead:

to offer more trauma based groups in Antigonish and other communities.

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Financial Administrator: Cindy Doiron

Bookkeeper: Jackie Jacques

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Women's Support Workers:

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Justice Matters for Women: Marcia Connolly

Trauma Therapist: Terri Pitts

SANE Program Manager: Pamela Reyes

SANE nurses:

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Heather Brander
Kendra MacEachern
Brooke McKinnon
Tanya Antle
KariLee Chisholm-MacDonald
Jill Cameron
Karley Deagle
Felicia Felix-MacDonald
Marilyn Grant
Maggie McInnis
Suzanne Munro
Kyla Neary-Griffiths
Cassandra Quik
Amber Richards
Leona Wilneff

Summer Students

- Olivia Hart
- Jasmin Desmond
- Asma Bari
- Taylor Myette

Lindsay's Health Centre for Women

Physician: Dr. Moira MacLean

Nurse Practitioner: Kathryn Boyd

Mental Health Practitioner: Cianna MacKeigan

Medical Administrative Assistant: Richelle MacLaughlin

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

SRCE Regional Coordinator:

- Kayleigh Trenholm & Taeya Jones

CSAP Regional Coordinator: Emily Trudeau

Antigonish/Guysborough Immigrant Support

Program Coordinator: Arianna Coello

Support Worker: Wendy Hughes

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