

Program Description

The *Gender-Based Violence Program* provides free support to individuals who are *at risk* of being involved in human trafficking or those who have been involved in the sex trade by *choice, circumstance, or coercion*. The program is grounded in treating trauma, relational therapy and addressing human rights. Our team works from a strength based, sex-positive, harm reduction and trauma-informed approach.

We believe in empowering survivors to have self-worth and to build healthy support systems. The program is goal-oriented, and participants are encouraged to be engaged working towards self-identified service goals. We acknowledge that it may take individuals different lengths of time to reach their goals and service planning is individualized to meet participants where they are at. However, it should be noted that discharge planning is discussed in the initial Service Plan and throughout service.

Our team is composed of *Trauma Therapists, Community Outreach Workers* and *Peer Navigators*. The GBV program offers the following services:

Trauma Therapy

Our therapists use a trauma-informed approach to help clients overcome psychological trauma. The GBV program recognizes that individuals who access our services often experience a combination of acute and developmental trauma. An acute trauma can be one where a person perceives a threat to one's life, body, or emotional safety. Developmental trauma can occur because of adverse and chronic childhood experiences, such as neglect and abuse. As a result of trauma, people may have difficulty coping with their experiences, which can be very distressing and disruptive to daily functioning. Our therapists support individuals by working toward managing trauma symptoms, reducing shame and blame and building healthy relationships. Our therapists apply various therapeutic modalities in this process, including relational therapy and EMDR, as well as provide psychoeducation for participants and their family.

Community Outreach & Education

The GBV team is available to provide educational workshops to youth in various settings. The presentations take a preventative approach to Sex Trafficking and incorporate topics such as healthy relationships, consent, and boundary setting. Concurrently, the team is available to provide training on the topics of Sex Trafficking and Trauma-Informed Care to service providers. Our presentations are facilitated by a Community Outreach Worker and our Peer Navigators.

Case Management & Service Navigation

Our Community Outreach Workers assist individuals with finding safe and affordable housing, accessing financial assistance, finding medical care, obtaining identification documents or legal consultation, school enrollment, job searching and can provide external referrals when needed. Assistance with life skill development, goal setting and budgeting support is also available.

Peer Support & Navigation

Our Peer Navigators actively advocate to reduce and end sexual exploitation. They act as support workers to encourage trauma recovery, build hope, confidence, and resilience within participants. The lived experience of the Peer Navigators lessens the isolation that many survivors feel, by creating a sense of belonging, connecting survivors with each other and to community-based resources. They can also offer assistance with appointments, court support, and aid with safety planning.

Support Group

Our Peer Navigators run an online support group on Wednesdays from 4-6pm with support from one of our Trauma Therapists.

Admission Criteria

- Youth and young adults between the ages of 12 to 29
- Serve individuals of all gender identities
- At risk of being involved in Human Trafficking and/or,
- Current or previous involvement in the sex trade by choice, circumstance, or coercion
- Must be a Toronto resident
- Have an identified need/goal to address

Referral Process

Please note that we are not a crisis service. If you are in immediate danger, please contact 911 immediately. The *Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010)* is available 24 hours, 7 days a week for telephone support and referral information.

Referrals are accepted from community agencies on behalf of a client or individuals can refer themselves if they fit our eligibility requirements and believe that their current needs match our services. Our referrals no longer go through Strides Toronto's general intake line. Please fill out and submit the "*Gender Based Violence Referral Form*".

Protecting client privacy is critical to Strides Toronto. Therefore, referral forms are only accepted **in person**, via **mail** or **fax**. **IMPORTANT: Please do not email referral forms.** If you do not have access to a fax machine, cannot attend our office in person or cannot mail your referral form, please leave a message on our program line at **416-438-3697 ext. 13265** and somebody will return your call within 48 hours.

Methods of submission:

- **Fax:** please fax to 416-438-7424
- **Mail:** please list the Gender-Based Violence Program as the recipient and address to 1200 Markham Road, Suite 200, Scarborough ON, M1H 3C3
- **In person:** please visit 1200 Markham Road, Suite 200, Scarborough ON, M1H 3C3

What to expect:

- Referral forms will be reviewed by the GBV team on a weekly basis. The team will consult whether the individual fits the admission criteria and determine what services best match the potential participant's immediate needs.
- The team will designate a primary worker for new intakes. The agency or individual should expect to hear from the primary worker within 10 business days of submission.

If there is a current *waitlist* for the service the individual is requesting, they will be notified within 10 business days that they have been accepted on the waitlist and with the contact information of their primary worker. If an individual is *not accepted* into the program, they will be contacted via telephone within 10 business days with an explanation as to why they were not accepted and will be provided with alternative external program referrals.

Any questions can be directed to the Gender-Based Violence Program by email at GBVinfo@stridestoronto.ca or by telephone at [416-438-3697 ext. 13265](tel:416-438-3697). You can expect a response within 48 hours.

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