

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

Date: Wednesday, July 08, 2015

Time: 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: 956 Kaneff Tower

Attendance: Elana Shugar, Rob Castle, Aldo Altomare, Siraz Chatha, Polly MacFarlane, Rodney John de Roché, Lauren Keyes, Jessica Thyriar, Chenthoori Malankov. Liisa Stephenson, Maureen Armstrong, Catherine Salole, Deb Hansen, Grace Permaul, Arden Maaliq, Prakash Amarasooriya, Daulton Scott, Margaret Macharia, Mandi Gray, Victoria Barnett, Sheila Wilmot.

Regrets: CWTP Representative.

Call to Order

- The Working Group meeting started off with introductions and reference to group agreement.
 - While being mindful of the legal implications, the intent for the meeting is to hear from M. Gray and other members of Silence is Violence (SiV), and ask questions specifically about their June 9th letter.

Brief Overview of Silence is Violence's June 9th Letter

- The June 9th letter had some good and thought provoking demands which were worth reviewing or giving due consideration.
- The Working Group reviewed the demands outlined in the letter and identified some points that they would like SiV to further clarify and/or expand on.
- The Working Group identified demands that were already being fulfilled, items that were already in consideration, and/or were underway.

Silence is Violence Presentation

- The Working Group welcomed SiV to the meeting and there was a round of introductions.
 - Representing SiV were Mandi Gray and Victoria Barnett. Sheila Wilmot (CUPE 3903 Equity Officer) also attended.
- R. Castle indicated that the Working Group is appreciative of all the recommendations w.r.t. the sexual assault policy, and the objective of the meeting was to have a conversation about the key demands in order to gain a better understanding.
- The Working Group questions were posed to SiV.

- **RE : Autonomous Sexual Violence Centre**
 - *Would advocacy and support occur in one location? What services would be provided? How would peer support connect with other services?*
 - M. Gray discussed the potential for professional and peer support although she does not view peer support as effective in its current form.
 - Options would include a centralized reporting, advocacy, and support space.
 - Reference was made to Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre (SHEACC) which was a former office at York.
 - Having an advocate for survivors would be good.
 - Self-advocacy can be daunting.
 - Discussed pros and cons of stand-alone centre versus designated navigator.
 - Suggested having a navigator situated in Security Services.

- **RE: Explicitly-stated rights for survivors**
 - *Do you have any suggestions for balancing survivors' requests for disclosures of sexual assault to remain confidential and not result in a formal report while also addressing potential risk to the community?*
 - Recognized that this dynamic is complex. Discussed considerations for survivors.
 - Discussion around security notification for community following any reported sexual assault. Suggested that alleged perpetrator should be named in notice.

- Further education around the dynamics of sexual assault committed someone known to the survivor versus committed by a stranger.
 - M. Gray does not know anyone on campus that has been sexually assault by someone not known to them.
 - On confidentiality, S. Wilmot indicated there is a high social bar around privacy that defies reasonability and safety of the community. Concerns around community members finding out information from other sources and this opening the door for misinformation.
 - M. Gray explained that by not officially informing a department of an alleged perpetrator's identity, it gives the impression that a survivor's safety is not being considered.
- **RE: Accountability Measures and Review Processes**
 - *The majority of Security Bulletins that have been issued regarding sexual assaults have been in circumstances where the intention is to inform the community in order to help identify a suspect. All incidents that occur on campus are included in the Weekly Incident Security Log (WSIL). York makes available non-identifying security statistics quarterly and annually.*
 - *The structure of Security Bulletins has changed over the last two years. Careful consideration of best practices as well as community consultation has led to these shifts. Does SiV have suggests in regards to Security Bulletins?*
 - M. Gray pointed out that although she did not view York Security Bulletins as ideal, they are not badly off in comparison with other universities in Canada. The concern she is raising is the issue of who decides when a Security Bulletin is released and what information is put out there.
 - M. Gray is currently working with METRAC to develop a template for campus security bulletins.
 - V. Barnett noted that she wanted to recognize that there are other groups in the room that have been working towards changes to bulletins over the years.
 - **RE: Feedback Mechanisms**

- *Conducting climate surveys was a METRAC recommendation and York is scheduled to conduct a follow-up survey this year.*
 - *The Working Group has determined that it is important to build in broader feedback mechanisms regarding response processes and services on campus. The Working Group has been exploring options. A tab on the Safety Website with information on providing input on the procedure development process has been added. Does SiV have any suggestions on feedback mechanisms?*
 - M. Gray indicated that Climate surveys are a good feedback mechanism.
 - A University of Toronto group that SiV is working with did a climate survey on accessing services on campus.
 - M. Gray says she receives 1-3 emails a week sharing feedback around services and/or processes.
 - M. Gray also pointed out that issues around addressing sexual assault is not a specific individual failure but it has been a whole set of institutions that have failed.
- **RE: Survivor-centric Investigation Procedure**
- *What instances would an investigation procedure be applied and how does SiV envision this working?*
 - M. Gray pointed out that the proposed model by SiV is not an ideal model; unless the investigator is extremely well-versed in sexual assault investigation protocols. Formal training in legal processes does not constitute the understanding of underlying issues of sexual violence.
 - In regards to tribunal process, consideration is given to ensure participants in tribunal proceedings are not jeopardizing the criminal trial.
 - Having multiple systems is difficult especially for TAs and community members with multiple affiliations.
 - Importance of ensuring a survivor knows they can request a response person of a preferred gender. University will make efforts to accommodate this request.
 - Training for service providers should also be intersectional in nature.

- **RE: Counselling for Survivors**
 - Concern was raised over the current policy that may restrict individuals that are involved in legal proceedings from accessing counselling at PCS.
 - Concern was raised about survivors potentially having to justify or demonstrate a need for counselling.
 - M. Gray would like PCS to provide long-term support within a trauma-informed framework.

- **Follow-up with TPS**
 - R. Castle indicated that TPS will be joining the conversation later to outline their procedures and asked if M. Gray had anything she would like the Working Group to follow-up on.
 - M. Gray did not have anything to discuss at this time.
 - M. Gray said that she will be doing her own systemic follow-up following the conclusion of the trial.

- **Additional Observations**
 - R. Castle asked M. Gray if she had any questions or additional observations for the working group.
 - M. Gray indicated that it was great that York is having these conversations and her aim is to be the last person who ever considered dropping out because of a sexual assault.
 - In reference to the meeting minutes posted on the website, dated April 29, 2015 in which SiV was mentioned:
 - S. Wilmot expressed concern over the discussion in the Working Group meeting.

- **Working Group members expressed concern over SiV declaring on multiple occasions that there are no survivors on the Working Group.**
 - M. Gray said that perpetuating that there were no survivors in the WG was not intentional. Furthermore, it was a comment she has made in the past and has since not brought it up. She only meant that there are no publically identified survivors in the WG.

- She also stated that she now dislikes the term “survivor” and is moving away from it.
 - SiV has publically identified survivors in its membership.
 - M. Gray asked how she would know that there are survivors present in the Working Group if none publically identify.
- **RE: Communication of resources**
 - M. Gray pointed out that information online about processes was not easy to navigate.
 - Information should be clear and concise with only necessary information, in a language that is easy and accessible. When an individual has gone through a trauma, they should not have to navigate complex language.
 - M. Gray said she has been on the Safety Website recently and there is a lot more information.
 - S. Wilmot pointed out that finding information in general on the YorkU website can be difficult.
 - M. Gray also said it is useful for campus service providers to clarify their purpose on their websites. For example, she had thought the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) was a research centre.
 - R. Castle indicated that this is just a beginning conversation because everyone in the room shares a common goal. SiV’s concerns had been heard and this will open the door for fruitful conversations as there is a lot of work still to be done. The Working Group was glad to have Mandi, Sheila and Victoria attend, and their feedback will help the conversation moving forward.

Post-Silence Is Violence Discussion

- It was noted that M. Gray was speaking a lot from her own experience in the discussion. Although other survivors may share similar experiences, we would like to recognize that each survivor’s experience is shaped by a variety of intersecting factors.
- It was encouraging that SiV has started to envision how a sexual assault support navigator would function and also recognizing that there are some support services that may work.

Meeting Schedule

- The next meeting is the all-day meeting scheduled for July 16th.