

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

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**Date:** Wednesday, April 29, 2015

**Time:** 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** 956 Kaneff Tower

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**Attendance:** Polly MacFarlane, Melissa Belisle, Noël Badiou, Elana Shugar, Rob Castle, Aldo Altomare, Jessica Thyriar, Deb Hansen, Tania Das Gupta, Christine Silversides, Catherine Salole, Grace Permaul, Prakash Amarasooriyah, Siraz Chatha

**Regrets:** Liisa Stephenson, CWTP Representative, Nusrat Sharmin Huq, Gire Jonathan, Marta Awad, Lee Iskander

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### **Updates**

- Last meeting was spent finalizing the sexual assault policy which was approved by the Board of Governors.
- Centre for Human Rights (CHR) Update
  - There were over 50 applications for the Learning Specialist & Advisor, Sexual Assault Prevention Educator position. CHR has narrowed down the best candidates. Interviews will be conducted towards the end of May. Individual will most likely start in June.

### **Overview of Policy and Procedure Development Process**

- When the Policy development was moved up we did not have to rush because the groundwork was already there.
- We were able to have consultations around the Policy.
- The Policy has not been without criticism mostly around the lack of detail i.e Procedures.
- The Policy was a formal commitment by the university and has a built-in annual review process.
  - VPFA is designated to review the Policy

- Potential for this group to be ongoing and to participate in the review process.
- Discussion around plans to more fulsomely roll-out the Policy when the Procedures have been developed.
  - Currently the Policy is posted online but there has not been a great deal of communication around it.
  - There is a need to develop and communication/marketing plan and interactive ways of getting students involved in sexual assault prevention and education.
  - Suggestion to look into how sexual assault resources are managed on other websites.
- With regard to procedure development, there needs to a space to address confidentiality because different groups on campus have their own structured confidentiality agreements.
  - There needs be clarity regarding confidentiality.
  - Suggestion to have a joint conversation with VTRA stakeholders around confidentiality because similar discussions will take place with the VTRA protocol.
- It was also suggested to establish a relationship with TPS in order to build understanding around process.
- We will spend the summer developing procedures.
  - Offices currently have procedures in place as outlined in the mapping process.
  - The Working Group will review these procedures and work towards a more seamless process.

## **Key Objectives**

- We plan to have procedures in place for September 2015
  - SCLD training is in August – Procedures should be available by then for training.
- Consultation will take place with academic employee groups
  - VPFA have connected with B. Miller to engage and consult with academic employee groups.
  - Other employee groups will need to be consulted as well i.e. CPM staff.
- Review options for survivors
- Clear outline of services provided on campus
- How will procedures be circulated and trained upon?
- Focus on addressing any gaps that graduate students experience
- Review process with TPS

- Need for creation of small groups within the working group to focus on specific areas
- Communication strategy needs to be developed
- Smaller groups to focus on key topics would be ideal:
  - Communication Group
    - Develop communication strategy
    - Website will need to be updated
      - Look into potential for an escape function/erase data from browser button on the page.
  - Training Group
    - Discuss training rollout
    - CSC Working Group has been focusing on creating an inventory of all the training and education related to sexual violence on campus.
      - The objective is to survey what is in place and allow us to identify gaps.
      - E. Shugar has been working with M. Hickman who has been leading the CSC Sexual Assault Education & Training Working Group.
      - They will be continuing this work over the summer in collaboration with N. Bello from CHR.
      - CHR conducts a large extent of training on campus. We also would also like to include the training and education initiatives by students.
      - **ACTION:** CWTP, YFS, SASSL, GSA, YUBSA, TBLGAY, and Access York please send E. Shugar information around what training, events, or workshops you offer regarding sexual violence.

### **Other Business:**

- Silence is Violence at York presented a list of demands at the Community Safety Council (CSC) meeting.
  - *Silence is Violence at York is a group that began organizing following an Open Letter by Mandi Gray, a graduate student at York who is a survivor of sexual assault.*
  - We will review their demands. Most of them require clarification.
  - There is a great deal of misinformation being communicated.

- Misconceptions raised about the OSCR's response process at the CSC should be addressed – Perhaps OSCR could do a presentation at CSC on the response process.
- There is a need to improve communication. This is difficult because the University cannot address the specifics of any particular incident.
  - Potential for general statements that may help clarify and address misconceptions.
- SASSL reached out to the group to clear up some of the misinformation about their office.
- Concern around the impact on community members and survivors that communication from Silence is Violence at York may discourage other survivors from accessing services on campus.
  - Brainstorm on ways to address this. This is undoing some trust that has been built trust because damage is being done at a grassroots level.
- One of the demands is to have survivors included in the policy and procedures development process.
- There is agreement of the importance of having survivors as part of the process.
- Dr. Rachel Griffin who was a keynote speaker at the recent conference on sexual violence that was hosted at York, raised the importance of having survivors involved in the policy and procedures development process.
  - We would like to have a clearer sense of what that looks like.
  - What does the process of requesting survivor participation and selection consist of?
- It is reasonable to assume that there are survivors who are part of the Working Group. However they may not disclose this within meetings.
- Working Group members represent their offices, departments, and groups but they also are working from their lived experience.
  - We recognize that although there are commonalities, each survivors experience differs based of a variety of variables.
  - Would Working Group members be put in a situation that they would be expected to self-identify as a survivor?
  - Would we be excluding survivors that do not wish to / cannot identify in particular spaces?

- This is something that needs more consideration.
- Some of the group's demands are already something that is in the works. The Working Group is open to having an ongoing dialogue with this group rather than formally adding their members onto the Working Group.
- E. Shugar has met with M. Gray for an initial conversation and will follow up to offer to meet with other members of the group.

### **Meeting Schedule**

- SCLD is conducting training in mid-August, we have 3 months to develop procedures. As such we need to meet more frequently and if possible, conduct bi-weekly meetings.
- The next meeting will be scheduled for next week when we will start looking at procedural flow charts.