

Our 2018/2019
Report to the Community



More Than A Bed

Our Vision
is a world with
gender equality
for all.

This past year, *Women's Shelters Canada* published a report – the results of an in-depth research survey – titled **More Than A Bed: A National Profile of VAW Shelters and Transition Homes** (Maki, K. 2019, Ottawa, ON: *Women's Shelters Canada*. Available at www.endvaw.ca). The research was conducted to better understand the services provided to women and children fleeing domestic abuse across Canada.

While reading the report, we were stopped cold by the current number of Canadian shelters for women, children and teens impacted by domestic abuse. Our nation now has more than 560 such shelters. Five hundred and sixty shelters operating in every province and territory, every major city.

We remember when the first shelter in Canada opened in Toronto in 1973. Oxford County was not far behind as Domestic Abuse Services Oxford, then known as Women's Emergency Centre, began operating in 1974, the 3rd shelter in Ontario and 5th in Canada.

Yet a major finding of the study is that 560 is still not enough. Even more shelters are needed in cities and communities across Canada to respond to a) the fact that turn-away rates are alarmingly high at shelters and b) far too many women in rural and remote areas simply do not have access to shelter services.

These two findings reflect our experience in Oxford County. Last year, DASO had to turn away 295 women seeking shelter. Many of these women were not able to access shelter beds due to lack of space – we were already full – while some were referred to more appropriate services or to a shelter in another community. We know this is one of our staff's most difficult tasks, telling a woman we can't provide the service she requires when she needs it.

And while many women, children and teens from across the County access our services, some County residents who live far from our shelter in Woodstock may have difficulty accessing shelter services due to factors such as where they are employed or going to school, the location of their child's school and/or a lack of transportation.

More Than A Bed also highlights the wide range of community-based services offered by violence against women agencies – we truly are much more than a bed. For DASO these include: transitional resource support (including court/legal support); a 24/7 crisis/help/support telephone line as well as a text line; community and sexual assault counselling; specialized programming for children/teens and programs for homeless women, children and teens.

We know there is no single solution to ending domestic abuse. We know it requires an in-depth, multi-year, dedicated community response. It will take time and money. One of the most important components is **PREVENTION**. Yet we receive no government funding for preventative activities such as public education and awareness! Preventing abuse and violence is a proactive approach that makes sense. We are already stretched to the limit as it has been more than 10 years since we've had increases to our base government funding. We can no longer offer important programs, such as prevention, without increased funding.

We continue to be challenged by those who have complex needs, such as mental health and substance use issues, as we don't always have the capacity – staffing, resources, training, space, etc. – to serve them adequately. This is a growing concern across Ontario and there is no easy solution.

Despite the many challenges, the DASO staff team and volunteers do amazing work. Our staff are compassionate, skilled and genuinely care for those who use our services. We also have a top-notch, cohesive management leadership team who is devoted to our mission. Our Board of Directors are dedicated, enthusiastic volunteers who competently represent the communities of Oxford.

What remains, even with the many challenges, is that we are optimistic. Day after day we witness the courage and strength of those we serve, so many successes with families moving forward to a healthier future. We are positive. We have hope for the future as we have for almost 45 years now, since August 1974 when we first opened our doors. Domestic Abuse Services Oxford will be here for as long as we are needed.

Thank you for walking with us on our journey toward a future without abuse and homelessness for all!

Rhonda Hendel
Executive Director

Pam Hagen
Chair, Board of Directors

Our Mission
We are leaders
in providing
effective, efficient
and accountable
services for women,
children and youth
impacted by
domestic abuse
and/or
homelessness in
Oxford County.

2018/2019 News & Numbers

552

women, children
and adolescents
impacted by
domestic abuse
or sexual assault
or homelessness
received customized
help and support

381

crisis calls

1,021

inquiries for
information and
support

91/51

The number of
women and
children/teens who
called our shelter
“home”

DASO commissions a study on human trafficking

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford hired the Social Planning Council Oxford (SPCO) to conduct background research on human trafficking. This research project was funded by the provincial Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Rural and Remote Supports and Services. SPCO undertook a number of activities including a literature review and information-gathering interviews with 11 Oxford County stakeholders (agencies and service providers) to answer:

**What is the most effective community response to human trafficking?
What key elements should a community response to human trafficking include?**

Key findings from the stakeholder interviews included:

- It is unclear as to the number of local human trafficking victims
- Most agencies consider human trafficking to be part of their mandate
- Awareness of the issue needs to increase as does knowledge of how to better approach and support victims
- There are barriers in existing systems

Social Planning Council Oxford's research led to 11 recommendations which include further exploration of human trafficking, formation of a collaborative group to determine a community response and map existing support services, and the creation of prevention and awareness campaigns.

Comments from o

Excerpted from the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and So



*DASO staff are supportive,
good hearted and make
sure that everyone feels
safe and secure in this
home.*

*There is no other place I would have felt so safe and
comfortable. Thank you so much for everything.*

*The amount of
knowledge and
experience under one
roof is amazing. I've
grown from my time
here. We, my children
and me, have learned
how to get over
the trauma in a
healthier way.*



Domestic Abuse Services Oxford

Financial Report

For the fiscal year April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019

Revenue

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	\$1,010,992
Ministry of Health (LHIN)	\$24,723
County of Oxford	\$81,504
Donations / Grants / Foundations	\$158,079

Total \$1,275,298

Expenditures

Residential domestic abuse and homeless programs	\$832,624
Community Outreach community-based: counselling programs for women, children and adolescents; sexual assault counselling; transitional resources including court support	\$286,778

Total \$1,119,402

For a copy of our audited financial statement, please call 519-539-7488 ext. 238

297

women, children and adolescents accessed our community-based services including: counselling, sexual assault counselling and *Believe in Me* – DASO's specialized program for ages 1 to 18 exposed to domestic abuse

113

women accessed transitional housing and resource supports including 79 women who needed help navigating the court and legal systems

We are grateful for financial assistance from our primary government funders who continue to support our good work. We could also not offer our range of programs and services without the generous help of supporters, donors, businesses, unions, service clubs and foundations.

Thank you for choosing Domestic Abuse Services Oxford.

Our Service Users

Domestic Abuse Services Violence Against Women Client Satisfaction Surveys

All staff members were extremely helpful and caring. I was very hesitant of coming to the shelter but felt immediately comforted upon arrival. I have made changes and improvements in my life and I sincerely have DASO to thank for this.

The staff were helpful and they dealt with my issues, and my son's, with compassion and great respect. On the days that weren't so great, they encouraged me to think positively.

You guys rock! You helped me be more aware of how to express myself and my issues in a better way. Thank you!



Focus Accreditation Report

Challenges and lessons learned

DASO's Board of Directors and the Management Team strongly support the principles of accountability. It is one of our core values and we have comprehensive policies and procedures to direct our accountability, whether this be to our funders, our donors or our stakeholders.

One tangible way to demonstrate our accountability is through accreditation. Domestic Abuse Services Oxford successfully achieved accreditation from Focus Accreditation for 2015-2019. We will again go through this process in 2020.

An important component of accreditation is ongoing quality improvement and continuous learning. DASO manages this process through our internal Organizational Learning and Quality Improvement Committee.

The purpose of this committee is to identify agency challenges, develop solutions and evaluate the results (i.e. lessons learned) by:

- Tracking trends (internal and external); monitoring agency and Service User data
- Building and maintaining best practice standards
- Building and maintaining quality improvement initiatives
- Creating and monitoring service/program evaluations

The 2018-2019 annual goals of the committee were all either completed or significantly moved forward:

1. Harm Reduction: Staff and organizational learning increased

Outcome: Management and staff accessed on-line learning and conference/seminar opportunities around harm reduction practices; harm reduction was a topic at all staff and team meetings; moving forward into 2019/2020, DASO will develop and implement a new harm reduction policy framework incorporating our learnings and also the unique characteristics of Oxford and our Service Users.

2. Program/Service Evaluation through the MCCSS Violence Against Women

Client Satisfaction Survey: Increase the number of women completing the survey to at least 50 women; review results and make recommendations, as required.

Outcome: DASO amplified our efforts to encourage Service Users to complete the MCCSS Client Satisfaction Survey; 98 women completed the survey; the survey results demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of Service Users (90%+) were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with their experience with DASO.

3. Risk Management: Research available risk management tools

Outcome: A sub-committee was formed to review best practice risk management tools. The sub-committee is continuing to plan for implementation of evidence-based tools.

4. Review Current Policies and Procedures

Outcome: This process is ongoing in anticipation of our next accreditation cycle in 2020-21. Committee members took responsibility for various domains and will funnel all suggested changes to the Executive Director.

Observed Trends and Organizational Learning

- Human trafficking: a noticed increase in system level attention to issues of human trafficking; DASO obtained provincial government funding to conduct research and subsequently hired the Social Planning Council Oxford to do this



work to gain a better understanding of human trafficking within a local context. A report was produced with the resulting data.

- Oxford County housing crisis: data showed a negative impact on where Service Users are discharging to; length of residential stay; increased number of bed requests from out-of-county service providers.

Challenges

- With no increase to our annualized base funding for many years, our resources are stretched to the limit.
- There is a housing crisis in Oxford County with an inadequate supply of affordable safe housing resulting in: extended shelter stays and the shelter often at capacity.
- There is a substance use crisis in Oxford County.
- Service Users are presenting with increasingly complex needs.
- Recruiting and retaining a sufficient number of Relief Residential Support Workers is an ongoing challenge.

Lessons Learned

- DASO appreciates the need for ongoing evaluation of policies, procedures and interventions to maintain up-to-date, best-practice service delivery.
- DASO is an expert in the provision of services to women, children and adolescents impacted by domestic abuse and/or homelessness. We need to concentrate on and remember our core service mandate. The strategic planning process emphasized this, and reminded us of our primary responsibility, mission, vision and values. We cannot be “all things to all people.”
- There are limited 24/7 service providers in Oxford County – and those who do provide these services are often called upon to fill service gaps “after hours.” We are a small agency and have learned that sometimes we have to say “no” and that we cannot fill many of the Oxford County service gaps.
- Due to the continuing housing crisis, we must continue to be flexible, creative and work collaboratively in service provision.
- Harm reduction is a working philosophy that requires us to be mindful of trends and flexible in our approach.

Guiding Principles

We are feminists advocating for women's rights and gender equality.

We facilitate collaboration.

We are effective and accountable.

We are responsive to Service User and community needs

Our services and programs are progressive and innovative.

We are community leaders on the issues of domestic abuse, sexual violence and homelessness.

We foster a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement.

Our CARE Values

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate honesty and transparency in all interactions ● Constructively resolve conflict and concerns ● Actively listen first and ensure others are heard ● Be sensitive and knowledgeable about differing communication styles and skills ● Offer a culture of openness and acceptance
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pursue excellence and quality in service delivery ● Exhibit self-awareness and self-reflection ● Keep commitments ● Deliver results ● Take ownership of decisions, actions and their outcomes ● Exercise responsibility for self-care, learning, personal and professional growth ● Demonstrate integrity to stakeholders
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt a non-judgmental approach ● Be genuine ● Right wrongs ● Demonstrate understanding and compassion ● Celebrate diversity ● Be respectful of each other's boundaries ● Respect confidentiality
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide individuals with information/resources to make knowledgeable choices ● Believe in the individual and unique strengths of people ● Encourage and support people with their goals ● Invite and implement input from others ● Foster learning, feedback, coaching and mentoring

Board of Directors 2018/2019

Pam Hagen, Chair
Sue Hodgins, Vice Chair
Nino DeLuca, Treasurer
Francine Paquette, Secretary

Directors
Karen Greenham
Sabrina Guilbault
Danielle Paluska
Marci Shelton
Jaime-lyn Thorne
Julie Thompson
Mary Roberts, Past Chair
Rhonda Hendel, Executive Director, ex officio

Management Team

Rhonda Hendel, Executive Director
Jennifer Weicker, Residential Services Manager
Karen Moritz, Business Manager
Heather Werby, Operations Manager

Staff Team

Caitlin Bionda	Sarah Brown*
Amanda Deadman	Sarah Fenton
Jodie Flisak	Chelsea Jackson*
Erika Jesik*	Kim Kane
Allison Leger*	Eden Martin
Laura McCreery	Jenny Martin
Carole Page	Alex Patton*
Shelbie Potter	Danna Stringle*
Julia Taylor*	Lyndsey Whetstone*
Samantha White	

**left during the 2018/19 fiscal year*

Our staff team is strengthened by the contributions of our amazing students and volunteers who this year included: Meghan, Leah, Lori, Victoria, Lynn, Krista, Diane L., Diane M., Scott, Barb, Betty, Susan, Mary Lynne and Lynn S.

Thank you all for your time, talents, kindness and assistance!

Men in Heels & Lunch on Wheels

DASO's 2nd annual event, held Thursday June 14, 2018 at Museum Square in downtown Woodstock, was lively, colourful and spirited as men sported shiny red shoes to raise awareness and funds to help victims of gender-based violence. Thanks to all our participants, sponsors, donors and volunteers!



DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES OXFORD
PROTECTION | PREVENTION | POSSIBILITIES

975 James Street, Woodstock, Ontario N4S 0A5

24-Hour Crisis/Information/Support Line:
519-539-4811 or 1-800-265-1938
Text 519-788-9993

All other calls: **519-539-7488**

Website: **www.daso.ca**

Email: **info@daso.ca**

Facebook: **Domestic Abuse Services Oxford**

Charitable registration no. 10821 9767 RR0001