

consciousness, honesty, respect, and a willingness to be vulnerable and perhaps let go of some things that have been important to us.

With respect as our guide, we are learning to really listen to one another and respond in new ways. We are forging unlikely links in a society that thrives on the politics and culture of domination. We have dismantled the barriers between us enough to face each other in a circle and join together in the work of creating simple, innovative services for women in crisis because of rape, incest, or other kinds of sexual abuse.

The staff is now in the process of breathing in and walking around in all the information you have so generously provided. It is your stories and your needs that are creating the vision of the Danica Women's Project.

We hope to complete the report by the end of this year (1991) and that you will see your needs reflected in it. The proposal for core funding will be submitted six months later. All work related to aspects of start-up including fundraising, program development, and creating community will continue without a break.

Our funding base is broad and includes grants from all levels of government, private gifts, foundation gifts, gifts from businesses, in-kind donations, and gifts from church groups. We are grateful for the support and glad for the understanding of the importance of our work.

Women who have suffered sexual violation deserve to have support and to heal. We should not have to pay and pay and pay. It is everyone's responsibility. This is the Project's perspective as we face the challenge of securing core funding as well as sustaining ourselves financially until we receive core funding. Please know that it is our intention to succeed. We must — for all of us. You can contact the Project at 517 College Street, Suite 230, Toronto, M6G 4A2, (416) 515-7906.



Coalition for Feminist Mental Health Services

By Bev Lepischak

During the past couple of years, the Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre (WREC) in Toronto has noticed significant changes in the profile of women who contact us for service. The number of women seeking counselling for childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, eating problems and alcohol and drug addictions has increased dramatically. Many of these women are experiencing a number of problems and often require practical supports as well as counselling. Increasing numbers of women have sought assistance from the traditional service system in the past, have not been helped, and are now seeking services from a feminist perspective. More of the women are in crisis when they call or experience frequent and recurrent crises. As well, an increasing proportion of these women are economically disadvantaged, and can afford to pay very little, if anything, for service.

At the same time, resources have not changed to meet these

needs. Most publicly-funded services continue to be delivered by hospitals and agencies which are not particularly feminist or sensitive to women's needs. They also often have major restrictions around the "types" of clients or issues and extensive waiting lists. A few feminist mental health services have been developed, but these often have limited mandates, face major funding problems, and cannot begin to provide services to all the women who need them.

As a result, last summer WREC initiated contact with a variety of women's services to identify common issues and to try to establish a strategy for dealing with them. Representatives from a number of agencies first met in September, 1990, and decided to establish a coalition which has been named Coalition for Feminist Mental Health Services. Agencies which have participated are Elizabeth Fry, YWCA of Metro Toronto, Opportunity for Advancement, Shirley Samaroo House, Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays, Barbra Schlifer Clinic, Anduhyaun Residence, Abrigo Centre for Victims of Family Violence, Immigrant Women's Health Centre and the Brief Psychotherapy Centre for Women. The membership of this group is not closed, and we anticipate involving other organizations, both as core members and as general supporters.

The coalition hopes to try to influence the development of mental health services for women in a variety of ways including: defining women's mental health to incorporate a "health" rather than a disease perspective; developing policies which link women's mental health to societal oppression rather than individual pathology; critiquing traditional systems and identifying gaps; developing holistic, preventative service models; and in working toward the expansion of feminist services through increased funding and the re-allocation of current mental health dollars.

The coalition has met on a monthly basis during the past year, and once with representatives of the Ontario Ministry of Health. The focus of these meetings has been to develop long and short-term goals and strategies for intervention. If you are interested in more information on the coalition, please call Bev Lepischak at (416) 534-8458.

Bev Lepischak's background is in social work. She has worked in the area of women's services for 8-9 years, with a focus on women's mental health. Given the massive shortage of services for women, her energies have been turned towards lobbying.

Bev is currently the Direct Service Co-ordinator at WREC.

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