

# **Bad Date Reporting and Response: Experiences and Insights from Sex workers and Community Stakeholders**

**Vancouver, British Columbia**



## **Discussion Document**

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**Supported and Directed by the BC Coalition of Experiential Women & Communities**

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## Foreword

The BC Coalition of Experiential Women and Communities (BCCEW/C/C) received funds to undertake the Confronting Bad Dates project which encompasses Research, Collaboration and Action to Reduce Violence against Survival Sex Workers. In this project we have explored formal and informal bad date reporting mechanisms utilized by four stakeholder groups: sex workers, community organizations, victim services and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD). This discussion document will be used as a tool in an all stakeholders' meeting, for collaboration and action in chosen areas.

Through the Confronting Bad Dates project, the BCCEW/C/C endeavours to pool the knowledge and experiences of all four stakeholder groups to explore what works while increasing the awareness of violence against sex workers and supporting stakeholders to develop new strategies to address this violence.

The recommendations from this document, paired with outcomes from the strategy meeting and practices in other parts of Canada and the world will support the customization and testing of bad date reporting and/or response strategies.

## Acknowledgments

The BCCEW/C/C would like to thank the 42 sex workers and the 17 community organizations, VPD officers and victim's services staff who gave their time, energy and insights for this document. Special thanks to Shari K., Beverly R. and Kelly W. for their contributions to this report.

## Contents

Section One: About the British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Women.....	4
Section Two: Project Background: .....	5
Section Three: Methodology and Ethical Considerations.....	6
Section Four: Findings from Interviews with Sex Workers.....	7
Section Five: Findings From Interviews with Stakeholders.....	13
Section Six: Report Recommendations.....	20
Section Seven: 1-800 Line Exploration Report.....	21
Section Eight: Bad Date Strategies-other Locations.....	32

## Section One: About the British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Women

The British Columbia Coalition of Experiential Women & Communities (BCCEW/C) is a consortium of sex worker activists who work to eliminate the oppressive systems and forces that create harm for individuals in the sex industry. We operate under the principle that members commit to creating an environment of inclusion.

We support diverse perspectives and experiences except where they contribute to harm of sex workers. The BCCEW/C does not support enforcement or rehabilitation models that either promote the continued criminalization of sex workers or sex worker dependencies on social programs.

### Our Mission

The BCCEW/C is a mechanism for the voices of experiential women to:

- influence legislation and policies that pertain to sex workers to become inclusive of their goals and desires;
- advocate for a continuum of peer driven programs, initiatives and services.

The BCCEW/C may also serve as a:

- consultative body of expertise on sex work issues;
- Host organization for sex worker workshops, events and initiatives; and
- Research and data collection body for enhanced knowledge development on sex industry issues.

### Philosophy and Guiding Principles

The BCCEW/C:

- Supports and promotes experiential leadership;
- Supports the development of essential services and a continuum of services for active sex workers through class advocacy, media response and public awareness;
- Creates a supportive network for sex worker activists to have opportunities for leadership and action on issues that impact their lives and the well being of their communities;
- Works to ensure the fundamental recognition of human rights and harm reduction for sex workers including dignity, safety, equality, and empowerment.

Guiding Principles:

The following Guiding Principles reflect the collective and longstanding activism of BCCEW/C members who will continue to work to eradicate racism, poverty, sexism, and violence by every practical means. BCCEW/C principles are built on our experiential analysis of sex work issues and are intended to advance dialogue and activism within the coalition and within our communities.

- \* We value, embrace and mobilize the authentic experiential knowledge, leadership and skill sets of women in the sex trade as the vehicle for change;
- \* We work to ensure opportunities for self-advocacy among women in and from the sex industry;

- \* We work to open dialogue for the reduction of harm and the elimination of the social, economic, and political conditions that lead to the survival sex trade, sexual slavery and trafficking in persons;
- \* We provide access to our expertise and our published materials to stakeholders in the BC/Yukon region and beyond!

## Section Two: Project Background:

The Confronting Bad dates project is based in an action oriented research approach which is committed to creating outcomes that have immediate and positive impacts on the lives of sex workers. This project will yield a fully operational, collaborative and coordinated bad date reporting/response mechanism for use in Vancouver through the following goals:

**Goal One:** to consult with active sex workers, law enforcement and community organizations to evaluate Bad date reporting mechanisms, response policies and practices related to sex worker violence.

**Goal Two:** to open dialogue and forge relationships with law enforcement and other protective agencies or emergency responders (doctors, nurses and councillors) to broaden the scope of their activities, increase awareness of sex worker related barriers to reporting violence and explore further collaboration.

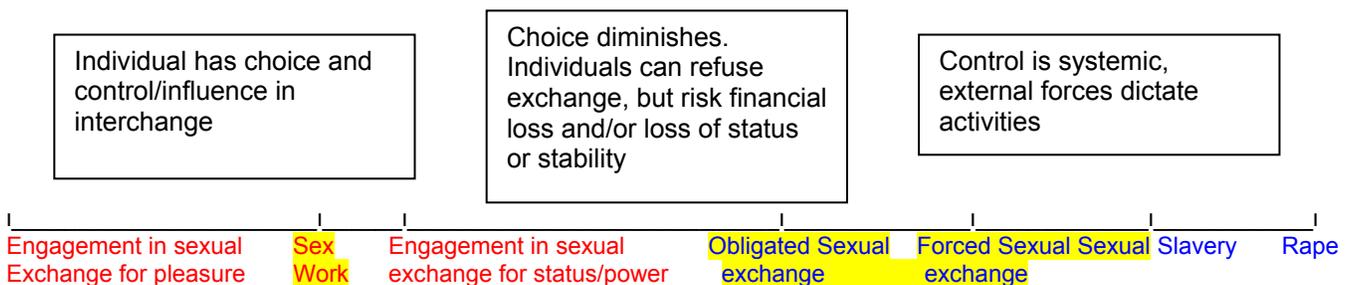
**Goal Three:** Develop and test the effectiveness of a new, customized or combined mechanism to increase Bad date reportability and responsiveness.

**Goal Four:** Ensure access to Bad date reports for all sex workers through organized distribution and internet sites to enhance their ability to add information about a date they might recognize.

**Goal Five:** Make portable any mechanism(s), tool(s) or strategies developed and tested to other comparable communities for further evaluation and testing.

### The Continuum of Sexual Exchange:

The BCCEW/C has developed the Continuum of Sexual Exchange (draft) below intending to acknowledge where projects supported are focussed and to illustrate the breadth of sexual exchange. This project will be focussed in the highlighted areas.



## Section Three: Methodology and Ethical Considerations

### Methodology

Questionnaires were designed for the four stakeholder groups and administered by BCCEW/C members. Members were trained in interviewing techniques and documentation. Participants were chosen from a list compiled by an external contractor of key stakeholders. All questionnaire data was compiled by a BCCEW/C member not involved in interviewing to ensure that contributors would be anonymous during data compilation.

### Ethical Considerations

This investigation was conducted in keeping with research principles. The document entitled “Research Ethics: A Guide for Community Organizations” Bowen et al. was used to ensure that participants in this process would be protected<sup>1</sup>.

### Informed Consent

All potential participants were briefed on the background of the BCCEW/C and the purpose of the interview. Information about the project funding and the intended use of the information collected was also shared. Individuals were also advised of the potential risks and benefits of their participation. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw consent at any time during engagement.

### Confidentiality

To reduce the potential risks related to participation, no names or identifying information was collected. For this reason, participants were not required to sign a consent form; however verbal consent was obtained from individuals before engagement. Those interested in participating in the strategy session provided their contact information separately and felt safe in continuing their involvement.

Additionally, to increase protection, all names of individuals were also excluded from this report.

### Remuneration

Participants who identified as sex workers were paid for their time in interviews. Payment was provided in advance to ensure that participants were free to withdraw their consent rather than “holding participants hostage” and violating consent principles. Nutrition was also provided where possible.

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<sup>1</sup> This document was created by sex workers and is based on the work and support of Drs. John Lowman and Ted Palys and is available at [www.BCCEW/Cc.ca](http://www.BCCEW/Cc.ca)

## Section Four: Findings from Interviews with Sex Workers

Please note: Sections Four and Five contain percentages, however our sample sizes are small and these percentages are not statistically significant. They are meant to reflect the proportion of our sample that was in agreement or disagreement with questions posed.

The terms: "Sex Worker", "worker", "participant", "respondent" and "contributor" are used throughout and interchangeably to describe sex worker interviewees. The terms: "Stakeholders", "Groups", "respondent", "participant" and "contributor" are used to refer to community groups, law enforcement and victim services.

### Demographics and Violence

The 42 sex workers interviewed had six months to 40 years experience in the sex trade. The modal category (most frequent response) was five years and the average length of time in the industry was 15 years. Participants were asked how often they worked in the sex trade. The modal category was "every day", however some worked once per week or as little as once every two months. 60% of respondents worked on street exclusively, 21% worked both on and off street and 19% worked off street exclusively.

74% of respondents had experienced customer violence and 93% of those individuals reported this violence however, most reported to friends, others told other workers, family members and community organizations. 21% of our sample reported violence to law enforcement.

When asked if they felt safe reporting this violence, 30% of our sample did not respond and 33% stated that they did not feel safe reporting violence but that they did so because they had to for the sake of other workers. Others noted that they felt judge and stigmatized all over again and that they really wanted the perpetrator(s) caught. We asked those in our sample who reported violence what the outcome of their reporting had been. 52% of our sample felt that there was no noticeable outcome and in 11% of cases charges were dropped. Additionally, 8 participants had their report appear on the Bad Date Sheet and in 3 cases charges were pressed against the perpetrators.

We asked sex workers if there was any organization that they would not report violence to. 31% stated that they would report to any group as they felt they had a duty to report. One in four workers interviewed stated that they would not report violence to law enforcement, especially in cases where there is other kinds of criminal activity or the involvement of organized crime. Others noted that they felt law enforcement did not respond in a manner that has been positive and that it is not worth the risk. Participants also shared that they would not report a bad date to organizations that were not sincere in their mandates to eliminate violence; to organizations that did not have former sex workers on staff and organizations that did not have a culturally diverse staff.

Of the interviewees who had experienced customer violence and did not report these incidents, we asked what prevented them from reporting or seeking help. Respondents listed a series of reasons, some of which include:

- \* "Dealing with police is not possible for criminals"
- \* "I would be ostracized by other workers"
- \* "My privacy and confidentiality would be at risk"
- \* "I don't want to tell people what I do for money"

- \* “Pride”
- \* “Shame”
- \* “I am not allowed to speak to cops ever”

We then asked all participants what needed to be in place to make reporting safer and they highlighted a wide range of services as well as strategies for workers. The availability of trained counsellors was the most frequent response. Their list also includes:

- \* A 24 hour counsellor within a safe environment;
- \* More than one Mobile van with staffed trained to take Bad Date and 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports;
- \* More open-minded police;
- \* A task force or team of individuals that can meet the worker where they are and share the pros and cons of reporting and walk the worker through the entire process;
- \* A phone line to call that is confidential;
- \* Maintain good relationships with sex worker organizations;
- \* Workers should only service regulars;
- \* An anonymous process.

We also asked respondents who should provide these supports and services. Most frequently, respondents stated that existing sex worker serving and friendly organizations should provide supports. Some requested a separate sex worker run service outside of existing organizations inclusive of trained peer workers who are accountable to sex workers and the justice system. Interviewees also stated that non judgemental doctors who understand trauma should provide supports.

## **Responses to Bad Date Sheet Specific Questions**

In this section sex workers were asked questions pertaining to the accessibility, format and relevance of the existing Bad Date sheet distributed by WISH Drop in Center Society. This organization took the task over from DEYAS. This section also includes expectations workers have from the four stakeholder groups after a Bad Date has been reported.

### **Accessibility**

Sex workers were asked the filter question “Have you ever seen the Bad Date sheet?” 14% of those interviewed had never seen the sheet. These individuals were shown a sample and asked to comment on format and distribution. Those that had seen the sheet were asked if they knew which organization put it out. 63% did not know or chose an incorrect organization. When asked where workers usually get the bad date sheet from, the most frequent response was the Mobile Access Project- Outreach Van. Others stated WISH, DEYAS, PACE and PEERS as sources.

We then asked participants if they ever looked for a bad date sheet and could not find one. 57% of respondents could not find the Bad Date sheet when they needed one. When asked what participants did next, all participants went to work anyway. The most common strategy was to ask other workers if they had seen the sheet or if there was anything new on the sheet. Some reported feeling panicked or afraid because they did not know who to look out for that

night or disturbed because sex worker organizations receive funding and worker safety should be their priority.

### Format

Sex workers were asked if they are happy with the way information is presented on the Bad Date Sheet. Less than half, 47% of respondents were pleased with the presentation. There were a wide range of reasons, some of which are summarized below:

- \* The Sheet should include a sketch of the car type so that it is more readily identifiable;
- \* The information should be condensed;
- \* Some participants felt triggered by the level of detail about the violent incidents;
- \* It is too protective of the violent perpetrators as the real licence plate numbers are never shared with workers;
- \* Workers expressed concern with literacy issues and believed that there was too much text on the existing sheet;
- \* Bad Date sheets used in indoor venues have a lot more information on them. Workers felt that Bad Date info should be shared among workers on and off street because customers access both kinds of venues;

Participants shared that important information should be in **bold** and **enlarged**, as well as contained coloured text or printed on coloured paper.

Sex workers also recommended:

- \* a color coding system for repeat offenders inclusive of statistics on types of prior attacks;
- \* a violence rating or profiles on specific offenders including modus operandi or indications of what 'sets them off';
- \* tips for workers to read body language and nuances;
- \* an acknowledgment that there are literacy issues for some worker and that Bad Date sheets may be written in well lit offices, but they are read at night where it could be snowing, raining and windy.
- \* the size of the sheets should be reduced or folded;
- \* the production of the Bad Date sheets should be done by former or active workers who care about our safety. This could be a job for some people.

In order to get an idea of what information is most important for workers to receive given the environments and contexts the Bad Date sheet is read in, we asked them if they had 30 seconds to read the sheet, what information needs to pop out. An overwhelming number of respondents stated that a clear description of the perpetrator was most important. They noted that cars and locations change, but facial features and identifiable information like tattoos etc. change less often. The vehicle description was the second most important piece of information followed by the licence plate number. However, workers noted that the licence numbers were purposefully listed incorrectly and that this was not reliable information. The details of the incident ranked third and the location fourth. Workers reiterated that need for high risk offenders to be highlighted and their desire for vehicle descriptions to be graphic representations. Additionally, details about any weapons used or information about the victim were also recommended as workers believe that the most dangerous perpetrators select

victims based on physical traits. If the victim was a woman, man or transgendered is significant.

We asked workers if the Bad Date Sheet should be renamed. 69% said they liked the name. Others wanted to see a logo or some kind of a brand or symbol used. Those that wanted a name change recommended:

- \* Predator Alert;
- \* That the title should include the word 'Violence';
- \* Or "Shit Heads who Should Be Castrated".

More significantly, workers noted that the title should not include the word 'Date' as it may imply consent. They wanted to see the title reflect its purpose, for example 'predator on the loose' or 'be on the look out for'-similar to police alerts.

### **Updates and Distribution**

We asked workers how often they would like to see the Bad Date Sheets updated. Workers recognized that not all bad dates are reported, but a weekly update would be sufficient. 30% of workers wanted the sheet updated daily.

We asked our sample of workers where in the community Bad Date sheets should be available. They named the three Vancouver sex worker organizations as primary and also suggested all community organizations. Ultimately, they wanted to see the sheet at locations where they frequent:

- |                         |                          |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| -On stroll on lampposts | -Medical Clinics         | -Community Centers       |
| -Rig Boxes              | -Street Nurses           | -Recovery Houses         |
| -Police Officers        | -Hotel Bulletin Boards   | -Social Services Offices |
| -Sex Shops              | -The Safe Injection Site | -Bars and clubs          |

### **Bad Date Response: Expectations of Stakeholder Groups**

In this section sex workers reviewed the roles of the four stakeholder groups: Sex Workers, Law Enforcement, Community Organizations and Victims Services. They shared their expectations of each group after a bad date had been reported. Their responses are summarized below.

#### **Community Organizations**

Foremost, workers expect community organizations to provide support, advice on options or next steps and follow up-providing information about the case if a report was filed. They expect organizations to respond immediately and without judgement. They also see organizations as their advocate and the only people in the reporting process that would believe them. Participants stated that they expect support to heal and that organizations do all that they can. Especially sex worker organizations as anti-violence work should be their primary objective.

It should be noted that a small number of participants stated that they did not expect anything from organizations due to lack of confidence in the organization based on past experiences.

## **Sex Workers**

Sex workers expected other workers to take the primary role of 'getting the word out'. They saw word of mouth as the fastest way of getting information out to other workers. Participants also wanted workers to watch out for each other more and report incidents as they happen in order to protect other workers as their lives depend on having this information. Sex workers interviewed wanted other workers to be safe, read all Bad Date sheets and to take violence seriously. 26% of our sample did not know what the role of workers would be.

## **Law Enforcement**

Sex workers wanted police to take incidents seriously and investigate allegations of violence. They expect that law enforcement treat workers like humans and watch out for workers. They also indicated that police who do their jobs well and protect workers should train other officers and sensitize them. Workers also wanted names and photos of individuals charged publicized in case they re offend. 19% of our sample did not want police involved.

## **Victims' Services**

Workers wanted victim service workers to become more knowledgeable about sex work issues and to provide non-judgemental supports as well as compensation to sex worker victims and their families. Participants highlighted supports for post traumatic stress disorder. 42% of our sample either did not know what Victims Services was or saw this government agency as part of law enforcement.

## **Suggestions for Future Strategies**

In this section, we asked sex workers about their opinions on specific reporting and response strategies. 62% of our sample did have access to the internet and 93% had access to a phone.

### **Internet**

Participants were asked if they would access the internet if bad date information was available online. 55% said that they would. Others had concerns about who else would have access to the information. Participants noted that the site should be password protected and include bad dates from other cities to form a nation wide source of information. As far as the internet site being a place to report violence, workers were concerned with how the information would be verified. They also noted that organizations or a group of sex workers should be the only ones able to post dates on this site after they have received face to face reports from sex workers.

## **1-800 Phone Line**

Sex workers were asked if they would report a bad date to a phone line. 81% said that they would. Participants were concerned about how complicated it would be as automated lines that we are all exposed to can be frustrating. Workers noted that the line must be planned carefully and must also be safe. They expressed concerns about who would control the line and who would have access to information given to the line. More than half of our sample wanted the line staffed exclusively. Most others wanted the line to have both features and a minority of workers wanted the line to be messages only. Workers also identified the need for a response team to accompany the line for immediate support after violence has occurred.

Of those who supported the line being staffed, 71% wanted it staffed by former sex workers. Others wanted a mix of sex workers, police and health professionals. Still others identified characteristics of compassion and understanding required no matter how the line was staffed.

## **Rig Drop Boxes**

Interviewers showed sex workers a map of the “Make it your Gig- Return your Rig” drop boxes and asked if they would like to see the drop boxes outfitted to hold bad date sheets. 69% of our sample said that this option was worth exploring and others stated that they don’t use drugs or that the boxes are not safe places to access at night.

## **Summary**

Of the 42 sex workers interviewed, work experience ranged from 6 months to 40 years with a modal category of 5 years. Over half of the respondents interviewed, worked street exclusively, while 21% worked both off/on the street. Of the sex workers interviewed, most worked “every day.”

When the questions regarding reporting violence, were presented, 30% of the respondents did not provide an answer. 33% stated they did not feel safe reporting violence, as the process made them feel judged and stigmatized “all over again.” These respondents added that they reported the bad date(s) for the sake of their colleague’s safety and also, because they wanted the perpetrator caught. 52% felt no noticeable outcome of the reports; furthermore, 11% of these cases were “dropped.” 1 in 4 workers stated they would not report violence to law enforcement especially where there is any other kind of criminal activity or organized crime.

When it came to accessibility of the Bad Date Sheet, over half of the respondents could not find a Bad Date Sheet (BDS) when they needed it, and went to work regardless. Respondents recommended a list of venues the sheet should be posted. Sex workers reported that the BDS should include the following in order: 1) clear description of perpetrator, 2) vehicle description to include licence plate, 3 ) details of incident, and 4) location of bad date. When asked about the name “Bad Date Sheet”, just over half of the respondents “liked” the name. Others recommended the word “violence,” be included in the title, as “date” may imply consent. Respondents also stated that a weekly update of the BDS would be sufficient.

Sex workers stated that community groups working with sex workers regarding bad date reporting, need to “do all they can” and expect an immediate response without judgement, especially if the organization is receiving funding for direct sex work program delivery. Respondents stated that there is an expectation among one another, in the trade, to take the primary role of “getting the word out” regarding the BDS. While 19% of the respondents stated that they did not want the police involved in the bad date reporting process, an overwhelming response was the need for law enforcement to treat worker like human beings and advocate for their safety. Workers also felt that Victim’s Services needs to become more knowledgeable about sex work issues and provide non-judgemental support and compensation to sex work victims and their families.

Suggestions for bad date reporting strategies included the internet, 1-800 phone line and rig drop boxes. While 62% of our sample stated they did have access to internet, just over half of the respondents said they would have access on-line bad information. Concerns included legitimate on-line reporting, perpetrators having access to information, updating and distribution of private information. The majority of the sex workers interviewed stated they would report a bad date on a confidential toll free phone line. Respondents stated they would like to phone line to be staffed by former sex workers as opposed to a dedicated voice mail message. In addition, 69% of our sample were in support of having the BDS posted on various rig drop boxes in the city, another form of getting the word out.

## Section Five: Findings from Interviews with Community Organizations, Law Enforcement and Victims Services

### Overview

Contributions from stakeholders have been collapsed in the following section. Some of the questions asked of law enforcement and victim's services differ from those asked of community organizations due to their roles. In these instances where information that is distinct to a stakeholder group, they are identified. Staff members from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General- Victim's Services were sent information about this project and were contacted for interviews. Unfortunately interviews could not be organized, but we look forward to future collaboration. In this section Victim's Services refers to community based services funded specifically to support victims of crime.

### Accessibility

Of the 17 organizations, police officers and victims services staff interviewed all have had access to the Bad Date sheet. 15 groups had the sheets available in their offices. Some kept the sheets posted in public areas and washrooms; others distributed information to staff and forwarded information to indoor and high track workers. Staff of the Mobile Access Project (Outreach Van) provided sheets directly to sex workers. Some stakeholders receive the Bad Date sheet by email weekly, others shared that they receive it infrequently or not at all. (It must be noted here that during the course of this research project, the Confrontation Management Team at PACE Society expanded its Bad Date distribution list). Respondents received Bad Date sheets from either the WISH or PACE email list or they picked them up from various organizations. 30% of participants had experienced not being able to find a Bad Date Sheet when they needed one. Most contacted one or all of the three sex worker organizations and were able to obtain the latest issue.

### Format

41% of our sample was happy with the format of the Bad Date sheet. Others noted that the information was "all mixed up" or did not contain enough detail to be effective. Additionally:

**Content:** information is too vague, hard to retain and needs to be presented differently;

**Literacy issues:** too much text and info needs to stand out;

**Translation:** the sheet is needed by a diverse population including indoor workers;

**Context:** papers size may be too big to fit into small purses and sheets can get wet;

**Format:** the use of columns may make information easier to read and retain.

Participants were asked how they would improve the existing sheet. There were a wide range of responses here and some mirrored the sentiments of sex workers. Stakeholders suggested:

- A logo or branding image;
- The use of columns or boxes;
- A way of identifying patterns;
- A rating for danger level;
- A way of indicating new Bad Dates
- A preparation for low light;
- Bold and enlarged print;
- The use of color and graphics;
- An accompanying web site with BC wide links;
- A map of hot spots or higher risk locations

We asked stakeholders what information needed to stand out on the sheet. Similar to sex worker responses, most noted the description of the person as primary. It was suggested that this description be inclusive of unique characteristics including clothing, a distinct smell, race or behavioural traits. Like sex workers, stakeholders emphasized the need for graphics and pictures of vehicle types. Licence plate numbers, location and details of the incident were seen as secondary and important.

We asked police officers what the key pieces of information a sex worker should retain and provide in order to increase the possibility of police follow-up. Officers noted that the licence plate number and any name or nickname the offender may have used is important as there is a national data base where this information is searchable. Additionally, if a struggle occurred and skin was grabbed or scratched, DNA can be obtained.

### **Updates and Distribution**

We asked stakeholders how often they would like the Bad Date sheet updated. Most indicated that weekly was sufficient. Some respondents that were involved in the distribution of the sheets wanted information available instantaneously or daily and noted that sex workers should get updates more often. We asked participants what organizations should receive the Bad Date sheet and they noted that sheets should be available in locations where the sex workers frequent. Their list included: bathrooms, laundry mats, clinics, shelters, indoor venues, transit, beat cops, cabs, telephone polls, meal facilities and hotels. Groups also noted that the sheets should be emailed, faxed or available on line to organizations in order to share printing costs among groups who budget for this expense.

### **Bad Date Responsiveness**

We asked stakeholders if they received Bad Date reports from sex workers. 53% did and some noted that reporting was inclusive of men who were exploiting female workers. We asked groups how they documented this information. Some groups did not document the information, of those that did, the information would end up in 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports, internal log books for distribution by staff or the Bad Date sheet. For law enforcement, there are General Occurrence and Standard Victim (911) reports. Information is processed and based on evidence and the desires of the victim the case may be investigated by Detectives or used to build evidence.

Participants were asked whether they found their documentation effective and 76% were happy with their practices. Many noted that their forms were intimidating or too clinical. Additionally, support and improvement is necessary but groups have limited capacity and resources. Some groups shared that forms should be standardized. (It should be noted here that many community groups interviewed have been in contact with a police officer who is working on standardizing 3<sup>rd</sup> party report which will be ready in a year). One group noted that filling out forms may serve to comfort workers, but behaviours and follow up needs to occur.

Groups were asked if they had a set procedure in place to dictate what staff should do after they receive a Bad Date report. Most groups were directed by the sex worker as to how they would want to proceed. Most often information was retained or put on the bad date sheet.

Stakeholders shared an overwhelming interest in collaborating with other groups to standardize the Bad Date reporting form (Which differs from the 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports but there may be opportunities to learn from the development of the latter). Participants stated that they were unsure how other groups collected, vetted and distributed the information and the process could be made clearer.

We then asked of stakeholders if they would take reports from sex workers who were under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Most stakeholders would take the report, proceed with gathering evidence, or did not have a policy preventing the collection of information in such cases. 30% did not respond to this question. Most stakeholders indicated that they approach situations on a case by case basis.

### **Supports to Sex Workers**

Stakeholders were asked what supports they believed were necessary after a sex worker had provided Bad Date information. Groups indicated that counselling and referral to law enforcement should be provided if desired. Also accompaniment for hospital visits and emotional support is necessary. Stakeholders also expressed the need for housing and access to resources to stabilize workers is essential. A group also stated that a book of car descriptions may improve descriptions and details provided. Community groups shared that there needs to be follow-up and ongoing support to those that disclose violence and/or proceed with police reports.

We asked stakeholders if they believed sex workers felt safe to report violence to them. They stated that sex workers may fear retribution and their feelings of safety are based in the level of confidentiality and support they receive. Community groups note that they build long term trusting relationships with sex workers and some sex workers feel that nothing will come of their reports. Officers stated that the existing relationship between sex workers and police are not historically trusting and need work but are improving. This improvement is indicated by the increased number of reports received by the department.

Community organizations were asked if sex workers ever requested a service or support that they were not able to provide. 35% of our sample said 'yes', workers have requested on-the-spot sexual assault examinations to avoid going to uncomfortable environment. Also, workers have requested immediate counselling or a continuum of supports inclusive of housing, detox and welfare that was not possible to provide in a timely fashion. Additionally, the timing of the request had an affect on the organization's ability to respond. Workers have also asked for make-up to cover bruises or the opportunity to take a shower/bath that could not be provided.

Stakeholders were asked if there were current strategies in place to improve bad date reporting or responsiveness at their work places. 65% indicated that there were no current strategies, but that organizations are always improving their referrals and the expansion of resources. Officers shared details about their new system called PRIME, in which police have access to a national data base and information about offenders are provided in real time (feedback truncated to protect victims). Officers urge sex workers to report violence immediately in order

to catch offenders before they have an opportunity to re-offend. Officers also shared details about the multiple choice feature of the new 3<sup>rd</sup> party report.

## **Bad Date Response: Expectations of Stakeholder Groups**

We asked stakeholders what they felt the role of their group and others in reporting and responding to bad dates and/or reports.

### **Community Organizations**

Stakeholders felt that community groups were in the front lines of Bad Date information collection. They felt their role was to get the information out to sex workers and to encourage workers to report information. Groups also saw themselves as the liaison between sex workers and police, act as advocates to ensure that the rights of workers were protected and to offer resources, support, transportation and accompaniment. Additional roles include sharing information with law enforcement and other groups for broad-based dissemination.

### **Police**

Participants indicated that the role of the VPD is to collect evidence, receive and process reports, follow through and investigate violence and to work on improving relationships and increasing trust among sex workers. Stakeholders added that police should become sensitized to the lives of sex workers. Some respondents noted we have a long way to go and that enlightened officers should take a lead role in educating patrol and traffick officers that encounter sex workers more often.

### **Victim's Services**

Some stakeholders were not aware of the role of victim's services, those who were suggested that their role is to provide counselling and compensation to victims of crime. Additionally, victim's services provide court support and free services for victims of violence. Stakeholders wanted to see an implementation of a specific service for sex workers, customized to increase access for sex workers and the applicability of their supports and benefits to sex workers. Respondents also expected the posting of Bad Date reports, provision of options for workers, explanation of their rights and support in navigating the justice system. There was also a recommendation that victim's services should visit sex worker and community organizations and share information and resources.

### **Sex Workers**

Stakeholders indicated that the role of sex workers include reporting violence or suspicious behaviour as soon as it occurs and to support other workers to report as well. Additionally, sex workers could take a lead role in passing the word on dangerous dates among workers. Some participants stated that it was the responsibility of other stakeholder groups to ensure that workers are safe to come forward and share information as well as protected from violence. It was also noted that workers should stay at the scene after they have called 911 and the perpetrator has left to ensure that officers can collect evidence.

## Best Experiences

We asked stakeholders what was their best experience reporting or responding to violence against a sex worker. One officer shared the following:

“Yes, I have had many. We arrested a lot people who hurt women in the downtown eastside. I remember once, I had read the bad date sheet and there was a description of a [vehicle]. The sex worker reported that t was full of stuff like he was living in his car. Anyway, I spot this [vehicle] in the [bar] parking lot and decide to take a look. As I approached, I can tell it’s full of clothes and garbage and I see this guy kind of walking towards the car. I’m not beside the car yet so he doesn’t get that I’m looking for him (laughs). So, I came up beside him and ask him for identification and so on. When we searched the car some of her (the sex worker’s) stuff was in there so we booked him! The car description on the Bad Date sheet lead to arrest and a 10 yr sentence!”

Participants noted instances where there were really detailed reports that led to police follow up and the perpetrator being found. Others shared experiences of reported violence appearing on the Bad Date sheet or a quick response from police. We asked stakeholders what conditions or elements made there experiences successful. Stakeholders shared that their success was due in part to:

- Reconnect meetings with police;
- Quick response from police;
- Collaboration with other organizations;
- Supportive environments make possible for sex workers;
- Ease, compassion and trusting relationships with sex workers;
- Immediate response from all called upon.

## Suggestions for Future Strategies

In this section, we asked stakeholders their opinions about specific reporting and response strategies.

### 1-800 Phone Line

76% of stakeholders in our sample supported the idea of a 1-800 line to report Bad Dates or violence for sex workers. They noted that confidentiality for workers must be prioritized. Those that were not in support of a line indicated that the level of care necessary cannot be provided over the phone or that information may pass through many hands and lose details or its integrity. Those in support of a line wanted to see it staffed primarily by former sex workers and community organizations. Others suggested that the line be staffed by Elders or a collaboration of community stakeholders trained to do the job in partnership with police.

## Rig Drop Boxes

Stakeholders were asked if they would be in support of outfitted the “Make it your Gig- Return your Rig” drop boxes to include spaces for the Bad Date sheet. 88% of participants believed that this would be a good idea for a segment of the population and it would increase the availability of the sheets to workers. Some saw it as a paying job for a team of workers to restock boxes and suggested that other options will work better for off street venues and those that do not use drugs.

## Internet

We asked stakeholders if they would be in support of a website where Bad Date reports can be viewed and/or downloaded. 82% were in support of the idea and noted that the information would be more accessible to organizations and off street workers. Some participants commented on the level of security needed. Some interpreted this question to mean that bad date reports would be uploaded to the website as well. Those groups shared concerns about accountability and questioned who would screen reports and vet the information.

## Summary

Of the 17 community organizations, police officers and victims services staff interviewed all have had access to the Bad Date sheet. Many of them had bad date sheets available on-site. Less than half of the participants were happy about the format of the bad date sheet; furthermore, they commented on needed changes to content, literacy issues, translation, context, and format. Similar to sex worker responses, most noted the description of the person as primary and a need for graphics, incident details, licence plates and pictures of vehicle types. Stakeholders agreed that bad date sheets should be updated weekly and emailed, faxed or available on line to organizations in order to share printing costs among groups who budget for this expense.

53% of stakeholders received Bad Date reports from sex workers. Documentation was limited and much of the information would end up in third party reporting. Law enforcement has different forms for documentation and depending on the amount of information given; cases may or may not be investigated. 76% of participants felt that the documentation was effective, but that the forms were too intimidating or clinical. It was noted that behaviours and follow-up needs to occur. Many of the participants stated that the steps taken after the reporting process depended upon the action wanted by sex workers. Most often the information taken was retained for the bad date sheet, even if the sex worker was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Stakeholders indicated that counselling and referral to law enforcement should be provided to sex workers if desired. They also expressed that the need for housing and access to resources to stabilize workers is essential. Most of the stakeholders mentioned that sex workers may fear retribution and their feelings of safety are based in the level of confidentiality and support they receive. Though trust is built, sex workers feel that nothing will come of the reports.

35% of community organizations noted that they had were sex workers that requested a service or support that they were not able to provide. 65% of stakeholders indicated that there were no current strategies to improve bad date reporting or responsiveness at their work places, but that organizations are always improving their referrals and the expansion of resources. Officers shared details about their new system called PRIME, in which police have access to a national data base and information about offenders are provided in real time (feedback truncated to protect victims).

Stakeholders felt that community groups were in the front lines of Bad Date information collection. Participants indicated that the role of the VPD is to collect evidence, receive and process reports, follow through and investigate violence and to work on improving relationships and increasing trust among sex workers. They suggested that the role of victim services is to provide counselling and compensation to victims of crime. Stakeholders indicated that the role of sex workers include reporting violence or suspicious behaviour as soon as it occurs and to support other workers to report as well. Stakeholders shared best experiences. The majority of stakeholders felt that a hotline for bad date reporting would be beneficial along with rig drop boxes and a website for bad date reporting.

## **Section Six: Report Recommendations**

1. Increase the BDS distribution sites to include the recommended venues as put forth by respondents. In addition, monitor the sites to ensure reports are current.
2. Implement BDS formatting recommendations to include four areas of key information (as put forward by respondents); address literacy concerns by implementing strategies put forward such as bold/enlarged type, laymen's English, less words and more visuals.
3. Implement standard reporting requirements and practice between sex worker & law enforcement, sex worker victim's service, and sex worker and service provider, to ensure the safety and respect of the sex worker.
4. Develop 1-800 bad date line strategy and potential internet reporting procedure to include a current/former sex worker planning caucus, reporting protocols for person reporting and phone intake worker, information dissemination strategy and evaluation tool.
5. Develop in-person debriefing processes for after a bad date has been reported. This may include a team of individuals who work 24hrs on call.
6. Continue to work around sensitizing law enforcement, victim services and community organizations on issues around sex work and survival sex work.

# 1-800 Line Exploration Report

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B.C. Coalition of Experiential Women: *Confronting Bad Dates: Research, Collaboration and Action to Reduce Violence against Survival Sex Workers*

Submitted by Grace Howse  
January 25, 2007

## Table of Contents

Pre-amble	3 - 4
1-800 Best Practices	5
Research Results	6 - 9
Ottawa Bad Date Line	
Niagara Bad Date Line	
Portland 1-800 bad Date line	
Considerations	10
Recommendations	11

## Pre-amble

### **Background**

The B.C. Coalition of Experiential Women is a mechanism for the voices of experiential women in the development of federal/provincial legislation and policies; the coordination and implementation of peer based programs and services; and the elimination of oppressive systems and forces that create harm within the sex industry. As members of the BCCEW/C, we share values that support our collaboration on prioritized projects. Below is a summary of our current initiative.

### **Project Background:**

*Confronting Bad Dates: Research, Collaboration and Action to Reduce Violence against Survival Sex Workers* has four major goals:

#### **Goal One**

To consult with active sex workers, law enforcement, protective services and community organizations to evaluate Bad date reporting mechanisms, response policies and practices related to sex worker violence.

#### **Goal Two**

To open dialogue and forge relationships with law enforcement and other protective agencies or emergency responders (doctors, nurses and councillors) to broaden the scope of their activities, increase awareness of sex worker related barriers to reporting violence and explore further collaboration.

#### **Goal Three**

Develop and test the effectiveness of a new, customized or combined mechanism to increase Bad date reportability and responsiveness.

#### **Goal Four**

Ensure access to Bad date reports for all sex workers through organized distribution and internet sites to enhance their ability to add information about a date they might recognize.

**Goal Five:** Make portable any mechanism(s), tool(s) or strategies developed and tested to other comparable communities for further evaluation and testing in other parts of British Columbia.

- Identify key stakeholders involved in the development of the 1-800 line for sex worker bad date reporting in Ottawa and interview for the following: development- who was involved, how did it come about; what is the overall operation plan; staffing; are sex workers involved, if so how etc.
- Collect news clippings, press releases and any other pertinent information from interviewed stakeholders that would support our advocacy for a 1-800 line in Western Canada.
- Document all findings for submission.

## Methodology

### **Purpose**

Identify key stakeholders involved in the development of the 1-800 line for sex worker bad date reporting in Ottawa and interview for the following: development- who was involved, how did it come about; what is the overall operation plan; staffing; are sex workers involved, if so how etc.

### **Research**

Through Internet and networking we were able to identify three different services that were operating a toll free line for bad date reporting. It was not easy to locate such services, as there are not many in operation. However each had a great deal to offer with many challenges and successes to share and learn from.

### **Interviews**

Representatives of:

Ottawa Bad Date Line  
Niagara Bad Date Line  
Portland 1-800 bad Date line

They were interviewed during the months of December 2006 and January 2007. The questionnaire utilized is included in this report (page6).

A reoccurring theme was that a great deal of support will be necessary for the creation and maintaining of a toll free line. For example:

“In speaking with Constable Christie of the Ottawa Police Service, it became apparent that the support necessary for a 1-800 Bad Date reporting line, was not only extensive, but roles were well defined. In the first few minutes of the interview, the philosophy behind the police supporting the line included a commitment to keep the line in place”.

## Best Practices

### 1. Ottawa Bad Date Line

Interviews(s) -  
1. Inspector David Christie, Ottawa Police Service  
2. Gena, Elizabeth Fry Society  
3. Maureen, Operation Go Home Support Worker

Project Partners – Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa  
Operation Go Home – works with youth  
Sexual Assault Center

Philosophy - Regardless of statistical data regarding line use, the line will stay in effect as the reduced cost permits. The line is “one” means of “protection” for Sex worker.

### 2. Niagara Bad Date Line

Interviews - Constable Jan, Niagara Police Service

Project Partners - AIDS Niagara  
Niagara Police Service

Philosophy - The line can be called toll free from Hamilton to Niagara at no cost. In addition, it is only “one means of supporting sex workers”.

### 3. Portland Bad Date Line

The rationale to interview the Portland bad date 1-800 line was based on the fact that the line provides 24 hour support. Sex workers operate and manage the line, unlike the Ottawa and Niagara phone lines where voicemails are recorded and monitored by the police.

Unfortunately, when interviewing the bad date line support worker, I was unable to complete the questionnaire and establish other community partnership information as she had another appointment.

Interview - Salvina, Support Worker

Research Results- 1-800 Phone Line

1. What is the monthly cost of the line?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	\$8.00/month + 3.5¢ per minute for received calls
Niagara Regional Police Service	Yearly contract of \$800.00
Portland Bad Date Line	N/A

2. What service provider is the line operated through?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Bell
Niagara Regional Police Service	Bell – NXX Line
Portland Bad Date Line	N/A

4. Who is the primary contact for the 1-800 line?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Inspector David Christie, Niagara Regional Police Service
Niagara Regional Police Service	Constable Jan (did not record a last name)
Portland Bad Date Line	The line is staffed by a sex worker close to 24 hours a day. They are former sex workers who volunteer.

5. How long has the 1-800 number been operating?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	January, 2007
Niagara Regional Police Service	2001
Portland Bad Date Line	2000, on and off

6. How is the line promoted?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Through the police providing sex workers with 1-800 cards; through E-Fry, Operation Go Home, Sexual Assault Society; key chains are given to the sex-workers (with 1-800#)
Niagara Regional Police Service	AIDS Niagara, police bureau, both provide information to the sex workers; key chains are given to the sex workers (with 1-800#)
Portland Bad Date Line	Through direct contact from drop-in centers, outreach workers.

7. How did the concept for a 1-800 Bad Date Line come about?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	The Niagara 1-800 line concept
Niagara Regional Police Service	Based on the needs of sex workers identified through AIDS Niagara sex worker program
Portland Bad Date Line	Sex Workers saw a need for the line (call was interrupted and interviewee had to go).

8. Were sex-workers involved in the planning and implementation of the line? If so, at what phase?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Yes – E-Fry consulted with the sex workers prior to implementing
Niagara Regional Police Service	Yes – through AIDS Niagara sex worker program
Portland Bad Date Line	Yes – from concept to evaluating

9. What is the expectation of the bad date reporting?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	No expectation on the part of the sex workers. They are not encouraged to provide statements. Police use the information to increase patrol areas and track predators.
Niagara Regional Police Service	No expectation on the part of the sex worker. Encourage a good description and leave referral agency info to support the sex workers.
Portland Bad Date Line	To meet the needs of the sex workers. To promote and empower sex workers work to implement own harm reduction strategies.

10. What does the bad date reporting, follow-up look like?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Sex-workers are not contacted unless they indicate so. Follow-up includes entering info into database to be reviewed by crime analyst, informing police teams of bad date areas, vehicle/physical description
Niagara Regional Police Service	Sex-workers are not contacted unless they indicate so. Follow-up includes entering info into database, informing police teams of bad date areas, vehicle/physical description
Portland Bad Date Line	Sex workers determine whether they want the police to have the bad date information. The priority of volunteers is to support the callers through listening and providing community referrals. It has been established that the police are not always the appropriate authorities to have the bad date information.

11. How is the information disseminated?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Information is submitted to E. Fry. From there they use resources to disseminate to sex workers.
Niagara Regional Police Service	Information is disseminated to AIDS Niagara – as per the original working agreement.
Portland Bad Date Line	Volunteers phone the information out to those who work directly with sex workers, male and female. Efforts are made to inform both indoor and outdoor workers of potential harm.

12. What is the protocol YOU engage in when a call comes through from a sex worker?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Dedicated voice mail to the desk of Inspector Christie. The info will then be added to a local database. Police will
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	be informed of car/date/area description in order for police to patrol areas of interest.
Niagara Regional Police Service	Dedicated voice line for sex workers to report violent customers. The information left on the voice mail is entered into a local data base.
Portland Bad Date Line	The line includes a voice mail and a former workers voice. Bad dates are reported to volunteers. The info is then sent to other sex-work agencies, escort agencies, youth social programs, etc. The information is also issued to the police.

13. What is the ratio between male and female sex workers reporting bad dates through the 1-800 line?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	As of January 17, 2007, received 3 hang-ups. No calls as of yet.
Niagara Regional Police Service	Receive minimal calls from male sex workers.
Portland Bad Date Line	N/A

14. How do you evaluate its effectiveness?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	We haven't had to evaluate yet. Regardless, the 1-800 line will stay in operation.
Niagara Regional Police Service	Social agencies determine whether the effectiveness of the line.
Portland Bad Date Line	Sex Workers determine the effectiveness – both former and current.

15. Are community members permitted to call regarding the sex workers?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	No, not intended for any outside the sex trade unless it is for the protection of sex workers.
Niagara Regional Police Service	Implemented for the protection, not arrest, of sex-workers.
Portland Bad Date Line	They do – volunteers inform callers, that the line is dedicated to sex workers reporting violent customers.

16. If you could do things differently, what would they be?

Ottawa Bad Date Line	Don't know at this point. Continue to model Niagara line.
Niagara Regional Police Service	The line is always being upgraded to better meet the needs of the sex-workers. Maybe include a larger region.
Portland Bad Date Line	Done it sooner.

## Considerations

### Ottawa Bad Date Line

<b>Pro's</b>	<b>Con's</b>
Consulted youth group to promote line.	Area access only includes St. Catherine's area.
No expectation of sex workers having to charge date.	Voicemail is a male voice.
Input received from sex workers on the implementation of the line.	No written policy, only roles and responsibilities defined.
Community collaboration.	No sex workers or former workers on staff
Cost effective. Stakeholders dedicated to keeping line open regardless of statistics	No sex workers evaluating the line or advising on direction

### Niagara Bad Date Line

<b>Pro's</b>	<b>Con's</b>
Increased the area in which the line can be accessed.	Relationship between partners is limited and does not include a lot of collaborating.
Cost effective	No sex workers or former workers on staff
	No sex workers involved in evaluation or advising on direction

## Portland 1-800 Bad Date Line

<b>Pro's</b>	<b>Con's</b>
Sex workers staff and manage the phone line	No secure funds available for the line
Sex workers are involved with development and evaluation of the line	The line has been suspended due to non-payment producing service interruption.
No pressure is put on workers to report	
Bad Date information is shared with a network of sex workers and helping organizations	

## Recommendations

1. Social Marketing – ensure the plan (contents to include: implementation, sustainability and evaluation) is ratified by current and former sex workers.
2. Dissemination Plan – ensure bad date list is issued to appropriate agencies and done so timely and consistently.
3. Project Partners – define roles and responsibilities of all project partners.
4. 1-800 Access – ensure free access is available for outlying lower mainland areas i.e., Surrey).
5. Caller Support – ensure “support” is put in place for female and male sex trade workers who call in bad dates.
6. Evaluation – develop phone line evaluation tool in consultation with sex trade workers.
7. Police Involvement – should police be involved in the process, define their role.
8. Voicemail – provide female voice on recorded message.
9. Voicemail – ensure recorded voice is not a familiar one to sex trade workers.

10. Voicemail – provide referral information on recorded message.
11. Sustainability – learn from Ottawa line and garner community support and investment.
12. Internet Support – the three support lines interviewed do not include an internet support, reporting process, nor access. This may be one additional mechanism to promote the line or support the process.

## National and International Bad Date Sheets and Strategies

City and Organization	Bad Date Reporting Strategy	Highlights and Attachments
<b>Calgary Alberta:</b> <b>Exit Community Outreach</b> <a href="mailto:exitstaff@woodshomes.ca">exitstaff@woodshomes.ca</a>	-Reports taken by Outreach Workers on stroll or in outreach van; -Staff accompany workers to support services requested; -Bad Date Sheets are compiled monthly and distributed by Exit and Safeworks	-Exit and Crossroads (Edmonton) exchange sheets monthly; -Bad Date Sheets are provided on Legal sized paper (Attached sheet has been reduced)
<b>Edmonton Alberta:</b> <b>Crossroads</b> <a href="mailto:kourch@ecccc.org">kourch@ecccc.org</a>	-Outreach workers gather bad date report information face to face; -Reports are also called into their offices; -Bad Date sheets are updated when 2 new reports are received; -Crossroads partners with other organizations and circulates Bad date information exchange.	-Bad Date reporting form and Bad Date brochure is attached.
<b>Niagara Region, Ontario</b> <b>Niagara Region Police Service</b> <b>1-888-818-4808</b>	-See above report; -Answering machine prompts caller to leave details regarding assault	-Information is tracked on a database; -Bad Date line does not subscribe to Caller ID and no attempts are made to identify callers.
<b>Toronto, Ontario</b> <b>Sex Professionals of Canada (SPOC)</b> <a href="http://www.spoc.ca">www.spoc.ca</a>	-Reports can be made via telephone for Toronto area or across the country; -After reports are made, their website is updated with information within 10-15 minutes with pictures and descriptions	-The website has a Bad Client List (which contains the serious offenders) and an Undesirable Client List.
<b>Victoria, Australia</b> <b>Resourcing Health Education (rhED)</b> <a href="http://www.sexworker.org.au">www.sexworker.org.au</a>	-Ugly Mug Reports are taken by staff of organization who have strong relationships with sex workers; -Descriptions and incidents are circulated among sex workers and community at large within brothels and community organizations.	-The Ugly Mug Reports are also relayed to police services; -Police investigate based on vehicle info and descriptions; -Bad Date Reports can be made online
<b>Wellington, New Zealand</b> <b>New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC)</b> <a href="http://www.nzpc.org.nz">www.nzpc.org.nz</a>	-NZPC collects and distributes Ugly Mug Reports. Reports can be viewed on line.	-Information is shared within regions including Auckland and Wellington -Only Sex Industry Workers have access to the Ugly Mug Reports