

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

**22 June 2020 / 22 juin 2020**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa**

**Contact Person / Personne ressource:**

**Joan McKenna, Superintendent/surintendant**

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**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INQUIRY I-20-06 - COMMUNITY OUTREACH TO PREVENT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, PARTICULARLY OUTREACH TO RACIALIZED WOMEN**

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À LA DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS I-20-06 - SENSIBILISATION COMMUNAUTAIRE AFIN DE PRÉVENIR LA VIOLENCE SEXISTE, NOTAMMENT UN PROGRAMME D'AIDE POUR LES FEMMES RACIALISÉES**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board receives this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.**

**INQUIRY**

How is the OPS is conducting its outreach to the community to raise awareness around gender based violence, particularly during the pandemic, in particular, outreach to racialized women.

**RESPONSE**

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has developed a series of best practices in collaboration with community frontline partners to reduce or eliminate gender-based violence in our community.

We co-chair a Violence Against Women (VAW) Advisory Committee, which includes partners from the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), Counselling and Family Services Ottawa (CFS) and Tungasuvvingat Inuit members. Many of our best-practices have been developed through collaborative initiatives that connect us with other Ottawa-area agencies to ensure that we are responding, not only appropriately to victims or survivors of abuse, but also consistently. We also rely on the great work being done by our Victim Crisis Unit to help provide foundational support to those impacted by this violence.

From this collaboration, our community partners worked with the OPS to develop its Sexual Assault Response Officer (SARO) course that trains frontline officers on the best way to respond consistently and sensitively to cases of sexual assault and provide those impacted with the needed supports. This training has been extended beyond the OPS to our partners at Ottawa City By-Law and OC Transpo. In 2019, 70 OPS officers were trained on SARO, along with several external partners.

In 2018, new Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Review Committees were set up, similarly to the Philadelphia model, to allow frontline partners the ability to review closed files where charges were not laid. In 2019, these committees met several times during the year to go over these files and provide both transparency of response and action for the OPS.

## **COVID 19 PANDEMIC**

One of the issues we identified early on during the pandemic was how to reach those stuck at home in volatile situations. As a police service, we often rely on reports from teachers, nurses, friends or social workers to let us know when someone is in jeopardy.

We turned to our partners at OCTEVAW, Crime Prevention Ottawa, Interval House and the Eastern Resource Centre who developed Unsafe At Home, a secure text and online chat service that gives women living with domestic violence and abuse the support they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 300 people have reached out for support during the first month of operations for Unsafe at Home Ottawa chat program, doubling the expected volume.

Since this program's launch we have had more than 4,800 visits to the website, with the majority of queries revolving around safety planning or emotional support. The service

will continue seven days a week from 8:30 am to midnight, and uses safe, encrypted technology to ensure that conversations are confidential.

We will continue to look at new ways to reach out to this vulnerable population to ensure their safety.