

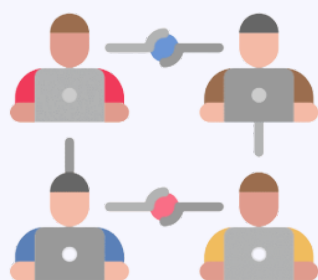
Organizational Culture and Resilience

Adapting the Violence Against Women Systems Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Overview of Results from the MARCO VAW Study

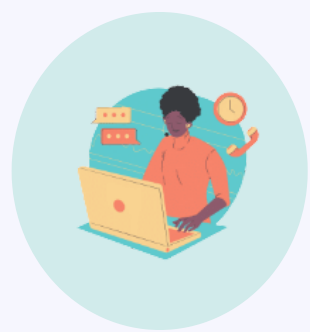
Cultures of Staff Teamwork and Resourcefulness

VAW organizations with established cultures of teamwork and resourcefulness facilitated staff resilience and ability to adapt to pandemic-related challenges

"And so, I said to the team, 'Guys, reach deep and remember those strategies you guys learned because we are going to need it. We don't know when this thing is going to end, but we're going to need to use every internal and external resource we have.'" [Residential leader participant, P110]



However, integral to the success of such a collaborative approach was the availability of resources, including in terms of:



Staff Capacity



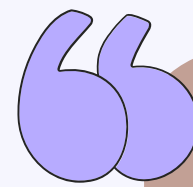
Training Opportunities



Funding

VAW Staff Passion and Drive

In the face of the many personal and professional obstacles of the COVID-19 pandemic, many VAW staff were resourceful and resilient, committed to advocating for and meeting the needs of their clients and teams.



I love the work that I do, this pandemic happened and I wasn't going to make the pandemic stop me from providing the support that I enjoy providing to women and the kids that need that kind of support because I'm very passionate about what I do." [Residential frontline participant, P140]



I learned that everything is possible. No matter where are the obstacles. Because it's going to be obstacles in your life always, but you need to go around and work around that. [...] I learned that I have to work what I have right now and do the best with that (laughs). You don't have a choice sometimes." [Non-residential frontline participant, P92]

VAW Services and Peer Support as Lifesaving

Survivors praised VAW staff, as well as their peers, for supporting them in creating distance from abusive relationships, securing housing, improving their wellbeing, and inspiring them to begin volunteering with community and VAW organizations.

"From that one-on-one interview with [my VAW support group leader], I got the strength and the courage and actually the confidence to be able to break up finally with – like, for good – with [my abusive partner]." [Survivor participant, C72]

"They do amazing work and these are the women who -- this organization has kept me alive. [...] You're surrounded by women from a variety of different life experiences. [...] And it's incredibly rich, and it is not maudlin, and it is full of love and support." [Survivor participant, C74]

"The women in the group are so amazing. [...] It's really amazing to see and hear some of these women where they were and where they're going [...] In the end, no matter where I go in my life, I'm going to take back I'm not a victim anymore."

Survivor Participant, C76

Source: Yakubovich AR, Shastri P, Steele B, Moses C, Arcenal M, Tremblay E, Huijbregts M, Du Mont J, Mason R, Hough L, Sim A, Khoe K, Bayoumi A, Firestone M, O'Campo P. Adapting the violence against women systems response to the COVID-19 pandemic. MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions, St. Michael's Hospital, Unity Health Toronto. Toronto, ON. June 2022.