

# Networking with & for Sex Workers

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# Good news!

While sex workers & ex-SWs have a clear advantage, you don't need to have done sex work to do outreach in the sex industry, to offer services to SWs, to advocate for SW's rights or to conduct research with SWs!

# Are you the right person for the job?

- Are you cool? Can you handle sex jokes & comments?
- Do you believe in diversity of experience among SW?
- Do you respect alternative lifestyles? (LGBT, SM, swingers, drug users ...)
- Do you understand SWs' need for anonymity & confidentiality?
- Can you think about your intervention in longer terms?
  - When timing is not right, don't panic you'll get another chance.
  - Life stabilization, conjugal violence & drug addictions often take years to resolve.
- **Do you realize that the alternative to justice is not free consent?**
- Are you willing to rebuild your contacts & re-educate from the ground up over & over again?

# Challenges of doing outreach to sex workers

- Finding them! Partly visible, partly hidden population
- Lack of knowledge about sex work: where and how it works, its diversity, nuances & contradictions
- Criminalization → Fear of being busted
- Stigmatization → Fear of hostile public health preachers
- Outreach **feels invasive** to someone busy working & half naked!
- Hours adapted to day & night workers?
- Drugs & mental health challenges
- Cold calls don't work well (more with independants)
- Safety issue for outreach workers
- Outreach to SW can't be limited to STI prevention

# General tips for gaining access to SWs

- Start with more visible SWs
- Be present on a regular basis
- Ongoing networking: Snowballing from one SW to the next, Resource-people in & nearby the industry, Referrals from other resources, ads where SW place their ads
- Also use: Clients, *pushers*, hotel staff, sex shops, tattoo artists, taxis, bars...
- Have something nice to offer: Validated SW-friendly documentation, Bad tricks list, condoms, nurse & MD, good food, beauty days, photographs, massages, **money for participation in programs & research**
- Follow the displacements created by police repression or business closings.

# Street-based sex workers

- Most visible and accessible of all SWs: Streets, bars, motels, crack houses & shooting galleries, prison, pushers, police, other resources
- Most urgent and primary needs
- Violence, drugs & mental health issues are more present than in other categories of SWs
- Give condoms to motels and bars for SWs & others
- Provide medical care to motel staff and pushers to gain access to SWs
- Activities in prison

# Strip clubs & massage parlours

- Straight massage or erotic massage? Can also advertise therapeutic services & show diplomas. Erotic normally have blocked windows, buzzer to get in, only female staff with no last name...
- Ask clients: client forums, you probably have males around you who use services...
- SW is not considered as SW (prostitution) by most strippers & massage providers (be careful about your choice of vocabulary)
- Condoms are not always welcome: try to say it's for their personal sex lives
- Language barriers?

# Escorts & independent masseuses

- Work in non-visible places
- Needs: Materials, info on how to run their own business, open minded accountant, problems with extortion or stalkers (police, lawyers)
- Phone calls: Watch out for multiple names
- Internet contacts: their own website, adult ad sites, client reviews forums
- Be visible and they'll also contact you. Web presence, advertise your service in the escorts ads.
- Provide medical care to agency staff. E.g. You could rent a hotel room to offer medical services to agencies, SWs & their clients

# Stella & the NCCID

- Montreal 08 – NCCID’s Montreal conference on “vulnerable populations”: Stella talked about the pros & cons of peer interventions
- Vancouver 09
- Mont Ste-Anne 09
- Motivation: Networking, building alliances, and to raise awareness among funders & health professional about SWs’ needs (from the perspective of SWs)

# Local networking

- Issue tables: Directors' tables, Outreach workers' tables, Homelessness, HIV, Harm reduction, Transsexuals, First nations, Neighbourhood security, etc.
- Outreach partnerships
- To increase referrals: Introduce your organization & share your intervention tools
- Give training sessions and conferences, participate & network in the training sessions & conferences of others. (Works on local, provincial, national & international level)

# Provincial networking

- Identify the resources that are already helping SWs in their environments
- In Qc, Stella meets twice a year with other SW outreach providers (HIV prevention projects):
  - To exchange about local realities, how to improve access to SWs, intervention challenges and to motivate the professionals to defend SWs' rights

# National networking

- Academics have supported the participation of community based organizations in meetings & conferences
- Forum XXX (2005), also international networking
- National tours to promote tools validated by SW: xxx  
Guide, Dope Guide, Training about SWs' realities
- Kiosks and participation in conferences at the national and local levels and elsewhere in Canada: e.g. NCCID, Harm reduction

# International networking

- Personal & business trips
- SW conferences
- International AIDS conference
- International Harm Reduction conference??
- Network of Sex Work Projects. Registration on the list through vouching system
- \$PREAD magazine (NY)

# In conclusion

- Networking is an important part of working in the field and can take up a significant amount of our time.
- Networking allows us to better respond to the real needs of SWs.
- Networking allows us to stay up-to-date both about intervention approaches and about new tools that become available.