



ABORIGINAL FRONT
DOOR SOCIETY



WISH Drop-in
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HEALTH
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BATTEREDWOMEN'S
SUPPORTSERVICES



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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Consortium Formed to Support Sex Workers to Transition, Exit or Retire from Sex Industry

Vancouver, B.C. – Vancouver has among North America's largest sex worker populations, yet there are currently no services explicitly and exclusively designed to assist sex workers in transitioning from sex work involvement to other forms of employment.

A consortium of five agencies was formed and funded to respond to the existing gaps and effectively meet the needs of those who do sex work which are Aboriginal Front Door, Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS), HUSTLE at HIM – Health Initiative for Men, PACE Society, and WISH Drop-In Centre Society.

Funded by Public Safety Canada with contributions from the City of Vancouver, the primary objectives of a five year project called *Transitions* are to develop and implement a transitioning, retiring, exiting program that is responsive to the needs of sex workers in this community.

Transitions is currently hiring a Program Coordinator, and Service Coordinators who will be trained, supported by, and incorporated into their respective Consortium organization's staff/team. They will be immersed in the culture of each organization to provide fluid service delivery consistent with each organization's mandate, existing staff, population group, culture, and approach.

"For almost 40 years, Battered Women's Support Services has worked towards ending violence against women and girls. Each year, BWSS works with over 220 women who identify as relying on the sex economies as part of their income and/or survival" says Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director at BWSS "Their primary reason for accessing BWSS services is due to an abusive/violent partner, boyfriend, husband, and/or pimp. *Transitions* will strengthen current services provided and deliver wrap around support for women."

"The HUSTLE Program at Health Initiative for Men (HIM) has been offering outreach and support for men in the sex industry in Vancouver for a decade and is excited to be launching their version of *Transitions* in 2017" says Matthew Taylor, HUSTLE Program Manager. "HIM values a non-judgmental, sex positive and strengths based philosophy

through capacity building, collaboration and a comprehensive approach to healthy living. *Transitions* will align well with HIM's mission by providing men with the necessary supports, life skills and options to assist them in reducing their reliance on sex work and/or transition, retire, and/or exit the sex industry.”

“Operating under a peer-driven and harm reduction approach, PACE Society has more than twenty years of experience in working with Sex Workers to address their self-identified needs,” says Laura Dilley, PACE Society Executive Director. “Every year, we provide direct services to more than 500 Sex Workers annually and have a longstanding track record of helping Sex Workers who wish to transition into other forms of work. *Transitions* will allow us to scale-up these efforts to better address the needs of Sex Workers in our community.”

“For more than 30 years, WISH has provided a place of respite, safety and opportunity for women engaged in street-based sex work. WISH supports approximately 350 women, daily, through a non-judgemental approach that values acceptance, caring, dignity, and respect. We are excited to provide women who access WISH’s programs and services and who seek to exit or transition out of the sex trade with dedicated, on-going support and programming to do so,” says Mebrat Beyene, WISH Executive Director. “The *Transitions* project provides a much-anticipated opportunity to combine the Consortium’s collective expertise and best-practices in order to focus solely on transitioning and exiting activities and programming.”

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