

**S.O.A.R.**

**An Innovative Model of Care**

**A Mental Health Nurse's Collaboration  
With Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**

# Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

---

- **What was the situation at that time?**
  - Volume of Disclosures
  - Increasing requests for services
  - Lack of resources to provide needed care
  - Desire to develop more effective response

# What would you do?

---

- Worked with colleague to create a model
- Developed a 3-stage therapy model
  - Individual therapy
  - Level 1 group
  - Level 2 group (could be repeated)
- Trained other staff (who volunteered)
- Dedicated time and staff from MH system

# Simultaneous Processes

---

## ■ Internal Process

- Met with coordinator
- Met with colleague
- Looked at models to strengthen survivor's ability to help each other
- 3-stage training model
- Train-the-Trainer model

## ■ External Process

- Met with community/stakeholders
- Met with various community groups, agencies and individuals
- Developed proposal
- Received \$60,000 grant "Women's Project"

# Internal Process

---

- A Train-the-Trainer model developed by Deirdre O'Sullivan and Rita vanVulpen
- 16-week training course for individual peer counselling
- Developed a 10-week training course for Group Facilitation
- Train-the-trainer model for individual peer counselling

# External Process

---

- The Kings, Annapolis Women's Project
- Identify target population
- Assess interest in development of services
- How did women currently understand and utilize services
- Identify barriers to services
- Assist women to identify their own needs
- Develop feasible strategies for specific services to female survivors

# Recommendations

---

- Peer counselling and peer support groups
- Informed, trained counsellors and therapists
- Women's Resource Centre or Drop In
- Public, professional and school education
- Accessible resources and referral process
- 24-hour crisis line

# Recommendations to Improve Service

---

- Complaints procedure
- Peer support
- Communication
- Education for medical staff
- Additional educational programs
- Improved access
- Resource library

# Recommendations from Survivors

---

- Someone to listen
- Someone who believes me
- Someone who is supportive and trustworthy
- Another survivor to talk to
- A safe place to talk to survivors
- Tools and strategies to assist coping

# **S.O.A.R. – Survivors of Abuse Recovering**

---

- 13 adult female survivors took first peer counselling course
- Training by MH Nurse and her colleague
- Space provided by the community
- Established officially in 1993
- Initially meetings included all members
- Chose name S.O.A.R. (an acronym of official name)
- Eagle symbol

# S.O.A.R. the Organization

---

- Original vision included 3 components:
  - Provide one-to-one peer counselling and support
  - Train facilitators to co-facilitate mental health led therapy groups (survivors have valuable insights into survivor issues)
    - Develop a train-the-trainer program
- Ongoing education for peer counsellors
- Public education – presentations, workshops
- Support groups
- 18 years providing peer counselling/support
- All the services above are FREE

# Nova Scotia Society

---

- Registered society with Nova Scotia
- Easier to apply for provincial grants
- Code of Ethics
- By-laws
- Brochures
- One more step to registered charity status

# Registered Charity Status

---

- Began process for Registered Charity status in 2000
- Completed in 2001
- Opened up funding possibilities
- Federal and provincial grants
- Credibility and accountability
- Moved from membership to Board model

# S.O.A.R. Committees

---

- Board - directors
- Fund Raising Committee
- PR Committee
- Peer Counsellor Committee
- Membership Committee
- Ad hoc committee for specific purpose and duration e.g. Nomination, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary committees

# Peer Counsellor Criteria

---

- Must be adult survivors of child sexual abuse
- Must be in a place in their healing where they are able to assist other survivors in their healing
- Must be prepared to commit to 18 - 3 hour sessions of training
- Must be prepared to have some visibility in the community as a peer counsellor

# Cross Gender Peer Counselling

---

- **Why was Cross Gender Peer Counselling necessary?**
  - Many requests for S.O.A.R. peer counselling service from male survivors
  - Male survivors wanted to be part of S.O.A.R.
  - Request was addressed at S.O.A.R. meetings
  - In 1995, 2 years after beginning, males were able to receive peer counselling services
  - In 1996, males were accepted in to the peer counselling training

# Group Facilitation

---

- Must be a peer counsellor in good standing
- Have had the criminal records check
- Paid up fees for the year
- Attend meetings
- Interest in involvement in the group process
- Willing to facilitate groups
- Helps to free up Mental Health and lightens their load

# Train-the-Trainer

---

- Incorporated into peer counselling training using concepts of group facilitation model
- Several S.O.A.R. members have been trained as Trainers
- Another member is completing training during the current peer counselling training
- One member is ready to take the training next time training is offered

# Therapy/Support Groups

---

- Demand for peer counselling grew
- Services to survivors offered by Mental Health continued to shrink
- Faced with increased demand from clients for group support
- Decision to conduct a therapy/support group
- Experience of a peer facilitator and knowledge of professional therapist to provide blend of therapy and support

# Therapy/Support Group (continued)

---

- In 2003, S.O.A.R. received funding to provide 30-week group in Kings County
- Also provided training ground for 2 members to complete the co-facilitation practicum
- Feedback was so positive, S.O.A.R. was encouraged to continue offering service
- In 2006, a 2<sup>nd</sup> 15-week group was funded for Annapolis County
- Followed by 9-week educational group to complete the requests of participants

# Support Groups

---

- In 2010-11, S.O.A.R. facilitated support groups in Annapolis and Kings Counties
- 12-weeks duration
- Intention was to have each group transition into their own community group
- Transitioning was a further 12 weeks
- S.O.A.R. remain a resource only
- Excellent beginning and hope for the future

# S.O.A.R. Process and Growth

---

- With growth comes growing pains - process
- No paid staff, volunteers
- Speakers and presenters from S.O.A.R. frequently asked to address other agencies
- Peer counselling restricted to survivors who complete peer counselling training
- Membership is open to all individuals having an interest in survivor issues and want to make a difference in their communities
- Mentorship – for new peer counsellors

# Grants and Awards

---

- MICA provincial award – 2010
- Appreciation – Jim Morton MLA to the legislature
- AVH support – CEO approval
- Wellness Initiative – Health Boards
- Foundations and Agencies
- Regional Community Health Associations
- Provincial – Mental Health Foundation of NS
- Consumer-Led Initiative (2<sup>nd</sup>) – update peer training, rewrite manual, French translation
- Fund raising – look for sustainable funding