

# Report on In-Service Cross-Training Initiative

Developed from the Recommendations of  
**Bridging the Service Gap  
for Sexual Assault and Mental Illness Survivors Report**

Report by

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## **IN-SERVICE CROSS-TRAINING INITIATIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The first year of the project, *Bridging the Service Gap for Sexual Assault and Mental Illness Survivors*, the study phase resulted in many recommendations from participants that focused on the need to increase collaboration between organizations and address the training needs of service providers working with the multiple needs of a high risk population. The need for training and education to improve communication, collaboration and mutual understanding between different agencies, managers and service providers was also noted.

#### **Lack of Funding**

Participants in the study phase of the project were invited to share their recommendations for service improvement in Lambton County. They expressed their views on the strengths of the existing services and noted how they thought the quality of those services could be enhanced. There was recognition that the agencies and front-line workers were doing everything in their power to assist all service participants. It was stated that the major block to better-quality and more extensive programs came from either government cut-backs in funding or from little or no increase in core funding over many years despite the downloading of programs by the government onto the community agencies and organizations.

Insufficient government funding has produced a community service atmosphere that is sometimes competitive and protective in nature. Fear of further funding cut backs or the potential for the termination of all funding due to the dreaded words “duplication of services” has forced organizations and agencies to focus on and specialize in specific forms of service delivery with clearly marked boundaries despite the multiple needs of service participants.

#### **Collaboration Difficulties**

Organizational responses to cuts in funding or the lack of meaningful increases in funding have focused on the need to become leaner and more efficient and many social service organizations have adopted a business-orientated design (Baines 2006). The increased pace and intensity of workloads in agencies have had negative impacts on workers, who have little time or energy to invest in the exchange of ideas or to consult with their peers or colleagues in other organizations.

It was important to discover the most effective way to assist service providers and managers to successfully collaborate beyond their organizations’ boundaries. To a limited extent, this was happening between agencies, albeit on an informal basis. Front-line workers built informal connections with other service providers. Formal collaboration can be a very slow process, as it requires changes in boundaries, policies and mandates as well as the development of protocols and permission from funding sources as well as

boards. Coordination and collaboration revolves around myriad practical concerns; these also involve decisions as to which agency will take the case management responsibility for high-need and high-risk service participants. This is a resource issue (i.e. involving time, money and staff) and also a liability issue. Moreover, when systems of service provision differ in terms of structure, treatment philosophy, approaches and funding streams, and when workers have different educational and experiential backgrounds, the coordination of services across multiple service systems is often difficult. These factors can produce tension between disciplines (Brown, Grella, Cooper, 2002).

### **Lack of Training**

In the study, *Bridging the Service Gap*, many counsellors, social workers and other service providers reported that they felt competent within their particular fields of practice. However, frequently they were not as comfortable with some of the intensive issues often experienced by the target population in this project. No organization or agency front-line staff that participated in the interview process during the first year of the study felt they were adequately prepared to address all service participants' service needs.

Yet, most agencies and organizations did not feel they were financially able to provide training opportunities for their staff members on a regular basis. The study populations of Moderately Mentally Ill (MMI) and Seriously Mentally ill (SMI) service participants who have a sexual trauma history often have multiple and pressing needs that necessitate concurrent interventions, or they tend to go from crisis to crisis. The “big three” issues—sexual trauma, mental illness and substance abuse—need to be addressed in concert as focusing on the sexual trauma alone can create an increase in the severity of the other two. In order to be able to provide this type of service, front-line workers need constant training to keep updated in their primary fields while accessing cross-training in other disciplines. With a core understanding of sexual abuse, mental health problems, psychotropic medications and addictions issues, workers are better able to identify early warning signs when something is amiss and an appropriate referral or intervention can take place before a crisis arises. After interviewing people who access these services, it was clear that there was a desire on the part of service participants for service providers to have a good understanding of issues around mental illness and sexual abuse/assault, violence and other key issues.

### ***Varied Training Needs***

The service providers also recognized that within their own organizations there was continuum of knowledge spread between new staff members and veteran workers. It was acknowledged that service providers develop their practice skills over an extended period of time and thus the training needs varied within each particular agency. Therefore, individual workers need to be trained to do their particular jobs well; but it was also considered important that they also know how their role fits with that of others in the community (Murphy et al 2006).

### ***Training and Job Satisfaction***

Another key issue of great importance is worker satisfaction within the job role and the manner in which it may reduce high staff turnovers that are commonplace within social services systems. Wagner, Van Reyk and Spence (2001) explored the importance of the work environment and suggested that a working environment that enhances job satisfaction and morale is characterized by good working relationships with other community organizations. These researchers also noted that access to appropriate training backed up by managerial support is vital as are strategies that enable workers to access the training. In other words, there must be organizational support and validation of training.

### **PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT**

The purpose of this evaluation project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative or ICTI, which was one of three programs developed as part of the three-year *Bridging the Service Gap* project. The ICTI pilot program was developed in response to the recommendations from the participants (service providers and service participants) during the first year of the Bridging the Service Gap study (i.e. in the year one study phase) and the direction given by the community at a community forum where the results and recommendations were presented.

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

#### **Collaboration**

Our society tends to foster systems of hierarchy and institutional separatism. The term collaboration will be used in this report to denote a concept of shared training responsibilities through a formal exchange of knowledge and skills between organizations. Organizations remain autonomous and separate but have agreed to engage in resource sharing using the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative. The foundation of this training initiative is based on the concept of reciprocity. There is an assumption of equality, although partners bring different but complementary skills (Glatter 2003).

#### **Partnerships**

The form of partnership referred to in this report consists of a voluntary co-operation agreement with shared responsibilities to provide trainings to other organizations upon request. It is based on mutual benefits for all participating organizations and co-ordinated through the Bridging the Service Gap website. Each partner has the maximum flexibility to adapt the initiative to its particular needs (Glatter 2003).

#### **Networking**

The term networking will be used to describe informal contacts between front-line workers in diverse organizations developed from the sharing of information and skills. These are voluntary associations based an informal agreement to share resources. It is assumed that the network building will take place during the in-service training workshops which will allow front-line workers to meet each other and better understand other organizations and the work that they do.

**In-Service**

The term 'In-Service' describes a training session that is delivered within the agency that requested the training. In-service training provides workshops during work hours that can be scheduled within the customary staff meetings and thus does not decrease direct service hours or necessitate travel time.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT**

The results of this project will add to the current knowledge concerning programs that foster collaboration between organizations with differing mandates, funding bodies, operational structures and methods of service delivery. The development of a program model design that successfully provides opportunities for front-line worker networking, an interagency exchange of skills and knowledge and an increased familiarity about programs and organizations may provide information for other communities so they may create similar programs. It is important that organizational policy makers and funders recognize the importance of such programs. Such recognition can ensure that the focus on direct service does not impede the collaboration necessary to enhance the quality of services within and throughout each community. Collaboration can allow front-line workers the opportunity to build their practice skills as well as better coordinate the services for a high risk population.

**RATIONALE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PROGRAM**

The first year of the three-year project, Bridging the Service Gap for Sexual Assault and Mental Illness Survivors, identified the gaps in services for people with a mental illness. Unlike other recent studies, the study also examined underlying issues regarding sexual abuse/assault and the need for services in Lambton County to address these issues. This study was conducted between August 2004 and June 2005. Data collection took place in the form of focus groups and personal interviews with a broad range of service participants from diverse local organizations. The interviews provided rich qualitative data on the perspectives and experiences of people who have accessed or attempted to access the services provided for those in Lambton County who have experienced sexual assault/abuse and have mental health issues.

The study, encompassing the region of Lambton County, examined the experiences of 112 people with serious mental illness (SMI) or moderate mental illness (MMI) who also have a trauma history of sexual abuse or adult sexual assault. The knowledge and practices of 68 service providers (managers, executive directors, legal professionals and front-line staff) added further information to the study. A copy of the results and recommendations from the report are available online at [www.bridgingtheservicegap.com](http://www.bridgingtheservicegap.com) along with the description and evaluations of the programs that were developed as a result of the study.

The study resulted in 29 recommendations of which 16 were able to be incorporated into programs to address the identified issues. The result was the design of three programs that would be developed, facilitated and evaluated in the last two years of the study. The

three main goals of the original study were to improve existing services, reduce barriers to accessing services and bridge the gap in services.

The existing strengths of service organizations and service staff members were recognized by all participants during the first year of the project in personal interviews and focus groups. The In-Service Cross-Training Initiative (ICTI) was designed to utilize this rich pool of knowledge to address the training needs for staff. This was a priority identified by 70% of service providers and 75% of the service participants who participated in the study. The initiative was developed so that this knowledge base could also help address the need for increased collaboration to improve service delivery that was noted by 93% of service providers. The ICTI also aimed to reduce the barriers for service participants accessing services (identified in the year 1 study as a requirement by 73% service participants and 90% service providers).

### **IN-SERVICE CROSS-TRAINING INITIATIVE**

The In-Service Cross-Training Initiative was developed with the goal that interagency training might underpin the movement towards enhance collaboration. This project involved a broad spectrum of service providers whose agencies often had dramatically different mandates and infrastructures; legal professionals (police, attorneys, probation services), social service organizations (counselling, mental health providers, basic need providers), educational institutions, private services and medical providers were among some of the diverse stakeholders interested in a collaborative training process. Good education and training helps improve interagency knowledge and understanding and consequently seems likely to improve interagency work (Murphy et al 2006). It was acknowledged during the first year of this study that staff in many organizations in Lambton County poor interagency knowledge and communication and there was relatively little collaboration between front line staff.

Interagency collaboration and networking between front-line workers in this form of cross-training was developed in order to assist in building constructive relationships between individual workers that would be supported by a strong commitment from management. New ideas that come from training reenergize staff as well as increase their knowledge about the multiple issues their clients face. The focus on building personal networks through this training program is an avenue by which scarce resources can be shared (Wagner et al 2001). The goals for this training initiative were as follows:

- To enable community organizations to connect to increased resources and skill bases and to decrease barriers between organizations;
- To increase networking opportunities and to expand front-line staff contacts;
- To promote interagency networking;
- To promote each organization's skill base and programs;
- To provide training on a wide range of topics to service providers;
- To provide ongoing support to front-line staff through consultation services available on topics by presenters;
- To provide presentation workshops for staff to increase their ability to communicate skills to others;

- To reduce in stigma for sexual trauma and mental illness through increased knowledge among service providers;
- To improve service delivery by enhancing sensitivity to and knowledge of multiple issues facing service participants and;
- To make the initiative available to a diverse population of service providers (legal, medical, therapeutic and educational).

**Program Assumptions**

The cross-training model presented in this report is based on several important underlying assumptions.

- Organizations are willing to adopt a new training system;
- Organizations are willing to share resources and skills;
- Organizations are willing to invest in staff members and allot time for collaborative training;
- The capacity of area organizations is sufficient to enable sustainability of collaborative programs;
- Sufficient demand and adequate resources (staff, time, space) exist for the sustainability of the program;
- Increased knowledge base and resource sharing is mutually profitable and;
- Collaboration with program delivery does not adversely affect the allocation of labour within sponsoring organizations.

**In-Service Cross-Training Model Design*****Structure***

The basic design of this training model is quite simple. Each organization involved in the training initiative develops an agency list of training sessions based on its own skill base. These trainings are incorporated into a central inventory of trainings that is made available to all community organizations in the network or partnership arrangement.

To create an inventory of trainings, each stakeholder organization is asked to hold a meeting with its staff and to brainstorm the skills and resources it has to offer to others. Each organization also identifies its own training needs. It is not expected that all workshops in the inventory will be developed before they are requested. The workshops can be created in response to individual requests from community organizations to address their training needs. This approach may reduce the amount of staff time needed to prepare workshops.

The training needs inventory is used to ensure that the trainings available will meet the needs of all the organizations. Any identified “training need” that is not offered on the final training inventory can be addressed. The agency can contact an appropriate stakeholder with a mandate that includes that particular area of expertise. The agency can request a workshop on that topic. In this manner, the various training needs can be met.

**In-Service Cross-Training Model Design (continued)**

The central inventory, which in this project included over 80 potential trainings, is made available on a website (e.g. [www.bridgingtheservicegap.com](http://www.bridgingtheservicegap.com)) with access protected by a user name and password. This area of the project website must be reserved for partners in the training initiative so that it remains available only to organizations invested in the program. This practice limits the number of training demands placed on each organization.

***Use of the Training Initiative***

Any organization that wants to schedule a training session may log onto the website and contact the presenter of particular training workshops. It can negotiate the date and time of the training. The presenter of the training session then contacts the project staff to provide information about the scheduled training date. This information is entered onto the training calendar on the website so that other organizations are aware of the training taking place. As the training needs of staff members can be very different, the calendar will allow other organizations who have one or two staff in need of this specific training to contact the organization where the training is to be presented and to request permission for its staff to attend the training. This method allows for the greatest flexibility and use of the training initiative.

***Supports***

It is crucial to provide support to workshop presenters so that they become comfortable with the requirement to take on what may be a new training role (possibly moving beyond their existing skill level in offering training workshops). Support is most effective when it is ongoing and can help staff meet challenges as they arise.

Recognizing that many people find it difficult to present in front of a group, a skill building session similar to the *Tips for Dynamic Presentations or TDP* workshop should be given at no charge to participating organizations to provide their front-line staff with information about presentations, creating handouts and using simple technology (PowerPoint, flip charts, overhead projectors) in an effective manner. Two workshops can be offered to provide alternate dates to accommodate the schedules of front-line workers. A booklet covering all the topics covered in the TDP workshop should be provided to the participants and given to the organizations, along with a DVD of the workshop, so that staff who are not able to attend will have access to the information. The presenter's workshop, DVD and booklet should be provided to all participating organizations at no charge in order to provide support for their staff.

**In-Service Cross-Training Model Design (continued)**

The website should include very clear instructions indicating how to schedule a workshop and what to do when contacted to present a workshop. The day of the scheduled presentation of the training workshop, cross-training project staff should attend the presentation to offer technical support and to collect data through evaluation forms at the completion of the presentation. Further support should be offered by telephone contact for problem solving or to answer any questions. Making available the cross-training project staff, via email or telephone, can ensure that there is ongoing communication about the project and address promptly any difficulties encountered by participants in the initiative.

**Implementation of the Model*****Partnerships***

The goal of the program was to develop a replicable model of interagency training collaboration. Interdisciplinary collaboration was forged to accomplish the training goals of the many organizations involved in this pilot program. All participating organizations agreed that government funding continues to be inadequate and unstable and that professional development and improved service-rendering ability was dependent on increased training and sharing of resources. In this pilot program, special attention was placed on the needs of front-line workers who are working with the high-risk, high-needs population who face multiple challenges in their lives. This program did not involve any restructuring by any of the participating diverse organizations and thus avoided a major obstacle in community collaboration.

The first step of this model was to identify potential organizations that would be interested in creating a partnership to share skills and resources in the form of informal training sessions at staff meetings. In order to identify relevant stakeholder groups and potential partner organizations, it was important to determine the potential contributions and interests of stakeholders. Basic information was collected about the potential stakeholders, the services they offered to the community, the population they served, the benefit the pilot program would provide to them, the centrality of the organization to the success of the program, and whether the organization had the capacity to provide resources for the program. This information was used to construct a profile of each organization in the network. The information from the organizational profiles was compiled to create a stakeholder matrix. A thorough review of every potential partner's interest and capacities was conducted using the stakeholder matrix and stakeholders were prioritized on this basis for inclusion in the pilot program.

Once potential stakeholders for this program were identified, a personal contact with each agency was arranged by scheduling a personal meeting with upper management to explain the program and to outline the potential benefits to their organizations, as well as their potential roles. They were each asked how they thought they could be optimally involved. Once preliminary agreement was given regarding stakeholder status, a meeting of the stakeholders was scheduled.

### **Partnership Development**

In order to build a collaborative partnership between community organizations, it was necessary to create a relationship between the member organizations or build on pre-existing connections. The goal was to bring the diverse community organizations together and build upon their assets, strengths and skills within the training initiative. The partners had joint responsibilities for the implementation of the cross-training initiative.

Twenty-one area organizations were initially invited to become part of the project during its first year. The partnerships were based on several underlying principles. First, it was deemed important for the organizations to share similar values and goals towards their work with high risk populations. Second, there had to be a basic level of mutual trust, respect and commitment to each other while working together on the project. They agreed to communicate to each other their organizational strengths, need for training and the resources they could offer. Third, all partners needed to acknowledge that, large or small, each organization shared equally in the partnership. Clear and open communication with the cross-training project team was vital and all partners needed to understand that the pilot In-Service Cross-Training Initiative (ICTI) program would evolve due to the feedback given to the project about their experiences while participating in the program.

Before the ICTI was launched, the stakeholders who were interested in participating in the initiative attended a meeting to obtain an overview of the project and to receive a timeline of activities that would be undertaken by the initiative and by each participating organization.

### **Partnership Roles & Responsibilities**

Partners in the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative had clearly delineated roles:

- Hold brainstorming sessions to be conducted before June 9, 2006;
- Hold brainstorming session with front-line staff regarding training needs;
- Hold brainstorming session with front-line staff regarding knowledge base and possible workshops that could be offered;
- Create a list of their training needs and possible workshops they could offer to be collected by ICTI staff;
- Provide information about the ICTI and permit agency staff to attend the *Tips for Dynamic Presentations* workshops;
- Access Bridging the Service Gap website to review the training workshops being offered;

- Schedule an initial training workshop before September 30, 2006 to be presented before the end of 2006 and schedule another training to be presented before May 2007;
- Attend quarterly meetings to be held to review program evaluations, possible problems or concerns and to provide suggestions for improvement;
- Communicate immediately with project coordinator if there are any problems or concerns and;
- Complete evaluation surveys.

### **Training Organizations to Use the In-Service Cross-Training Model**

It was important to the smooth operation of this training initiative that the partners understand the procedures for working within the model. A PowerPoint presentation was given to explain the procedure for scheduling a training session and what the agency should do when contacted to provide a training session. When the website was operational, a website training session was held so that all partners would feel comfortable with the various sections of website sections and could gain an understanding of the online process for participating in the training initiative. The section of the website for the ICTI provided information about the process of scheduling and providing training workshops.

The presentation allowed the partners to ask questions and to gain a clearer understanding of the process. All partners who attended this training were given a package containing brochures outlining the steps of the initiative. These brochures were to be given to the staff of the agency. Those partners not at the training were mailed a printed copy of the procedure along with staff brochures and they were encouraged to log on to the website to explore the training section. At many organizational staff meetings, an ICTI representative reviewed the initiative with front-line staff, outlined the steps for scheduling a training session, and how to respond to a request to deliver a training session. Printed copies of the details were given, at each meeting, to the front-line staff.

### **Program Implementation**

Management of the community agencies and organizations brainstormed with their front-line workers regarding the knowledge base pertaining to their agency mandate and the skills their workers had developed. The focus of this activity was on identifying the knowledge and skills that could be shared with other organizations in the community. This training model was designed so that front-line staff would have a level of ownership over the training initiative and it would directly address their needs. It was designed so that the process of brainstorming staff skills would be an empowering process for staff as they identified their own strengths and skills.

Although many of the partners did develop lists that were collected for the central inventory, several agencies did not. Reminders were sent by email and when there was still a minimal response, the study staff researched each particular organization using the organization's own website if one was available or conducted a general internet search on their type of service provision. A list of possible trainings they could offer was

developed for them and sent to them with a letter requesting that they review this list with their staff and make changes, substitutions and deletions of any topic they felt was not appropriate. The response to this request was very favourable as it did not require as much work and gave them a starting point to use for the development of trainings.

Even though the goal was to engage front-line staff in the development of a list of their training needs so that these needs could be specifically addressed, only one agency actually submitted a list of needs. It is unclear whether the lists of trainings that could be offered came from front-line staff or directly from the management without staff input.

The resulting lists of training needs and skills formed a central inventory. When a training need was identified that had not been addressed on the skill list, the appropriate organization was contacted to ascertain if this topic could be developed from their particular skill base. Only one training session was requested that was not on the list and it was easily provided for by another organization. The resulting central inventory of over 80 possible training workshops was posted on the project website with contact names and telephone numbers.

The process to be followed for planning an ICTI training session was straight forward. Participating organizations could choose a workshop that would meet their training needs, contact the staff responsible for developing that workshop and schedule the workshop for their staff meeting. The staff member responsible for providing the workshop could contact the administrator of the website in order to have the workshop posted on the website training calendar. A member of the study team would then contact the workshop facilitator and provide support for the workshop development. The ICTI staff would also attend the workshop to provide on-site support, as well as to collect the relevant data for the program evaluation.

### **Autonomy**

The organizations were encouraged to develop training workshops that were grounded in their skill base and this permitted each agency to best highlight their skills and practice knowledge. Each organization had full control over the topics, training design, presentation and handouts. It was not expected that all workshops would be developed before they were requested. The workshops were to be created in response to community training needs and this would reduce the amount of staff time needed in preparation for the workshops.

All training workshops were to be designed according to the presenters' comfort levels. Staff presenters controlled the number of people to whom they were comfortable presenting, they were able to present in teams, the presentation could be informal and they could specify the length of the presentation. All these factors, including the date of the presentation, were negotiated between the presenter and the organization requesting the training. This flexibility enabled the participants in the initiative to work around their busy schedules and reduce the impact on either organization.

**Project Monitoring and Management**

Without an appropriate monitoring system, problems that might be easily addressed could potentially grow to unmanageable proportions, alienating participants, diminishing partner commitments and ultimately defeating the program goals. The ICTI staff were available at each workshop to provide support and act as a resource for partnership presenters and they observed the workshop activities. The collection of evaluation data after the workshop provided a method of monitoring the program and provided immediate feedback to inform adaptive planning.

Quarterly meetings with the management of participating organizations provided important discussions concerning the program and allowed further monitoring of the process of training provision. Telephone support was offered to staff and management to provide immediate contact with the ICTI program and to offer support and problem solving while ensuring that problems did not increase. Ongoing communication and feedback allowed the program to be closely monitored. The project website provided project monitoring concerning the topics that were being scheduled most frequently, which organizations were participating in providing workshops and requesting workshops

**Communication  
Staff**

The provision of ongoing support to workshop presenters is a crucial component of the communication process. Immediate feedback from presenters and workshop participants in the evaluation process allowed for continuous redesign of the program to ensure successful outcomes. The willingness of the program support staff to listen to the input of front-line staff and to confront and cope with problems allowed for adaptive planning. Any changes made in the program due to the feedback from presenters and workshop participants were acknowledged and reported to all organizations in an email memo. Without adequate feedback and response loops, needs may have gone unrecognized or might not be addressed in a timely fashion.

**PROCEDURE****Purposeful Sampling Strategy**

As this was a pilot program, it was deemed necessary to start with a small but diverse group of organizations in order to facilitate the management of the program. This new program underwent an ongoing evaluation process that would allow for problems, concerns and obstacles to be identified and the flexibility of the program permitted adjustments and redesign of the program to meet the needs of participating agencies.

In the second year of the training initiative, the organizations met to discuss the progress of the program and, due to the low use of the training initiative, they decided to open the program to other organizations that were listed in the larger Community Resource Guide developed to provide a broader resource identifying local services. This Community Resource Guide was developed simultaneously with the ICTI and a portion of the website

was password protected for use only by the agencies involved with the ICTI program. Those agencies that were in the Community Resource Guide were already aware of the Bridging the Service Gap study and the website. It was thought that this knowledge would make it much easier to explain another program connected to the study. Forty five invitations were emailed to other organizations and eleven responded and attended a meeting in order to learn about the cross-training initiative. All eleven chose to participate and agreed to provide one training to the workshop list and schedule one workshop before the end of May 2007.

Organizations were strategically and purposefully selected to ensure they provided service to those who experienced sexual trauma and mental illness and they represented a diverse group of organizations from many different service sectors of the community. No specific sample size was predetermined as the program could accommodate a large number of organizations.

## **Recruitment**

### ***Brochures***

Brochures were developed for service providers to inform them about the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative pilot program and encourage interest in the program. Brochures were also developed for potential stakeholders to describe the program and provide information.

### ***Media Launch***

At a workshop for “Tips for Dynamic Presentations” developed by the Bridging the Service Gap project, an announcement was made about the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative pilot program to the attending media. It was hoped that the media coverage would ensure that the public and service providers would be aware of the new program and, through the media coverage, they were invited to contact the study for more information.

A press release about the project at its inception and one sent to the media upon completion of the project ensured that information about the initiative was disseminated to the community and it was expected that the program would be recognized when it was opened to a wider spectrum of service providing organizations. The press release resulted in radio and newspaper coverage of the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative through interviews with training facilitators and front-line staff participants.

## **EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM**

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Various qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data during this study. Organizations participating in the program and facilitators of the program contributed information through written documents, meeting minutes, surveys and observations.

### **Participating Organizations**

#### *Evaluation forms*

Evaluation forms were administered to participants at the mid-point of the initiative. Stakeholders present at the meeting completed the forms and returned them immediately. Stakeholders not present received the evaluation forms by email. The forms were also sent to the management of the organizations to be forwarded to staff members and returned to the study. The evaluation forms were designed to allow participants to give qualitative and quantitative feedback about the program. Quantitative and qualitative information on the surveys was recorded electronically into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 11.0) and QSR NUD\*IST 6 (Non-numerical, Unstructured, Data-indexing, Searching, Theorizing)

#### **Stakeholder Meetings**

The data collected during the meetings related to the project's goals, objectives and recommendations for change. It provided an opportunity for organizations to give feedback about their experiences in the training program. Since a major part of the program implementation relied on the participation of the network members, it was vital to record their impressions and recommendations.

#### *Unsolicited Data*

Unsolicited data was also provided by participating organizations and subsequently recorded for use in the program evaluation. This data was provided through telephone calls and emails to program facilitators. This process was encouraged by the facilitators in order to provide immediate responses to comments and concerns about the program and to provide support to those organizations experiencing difficulties with the process. As a pilot project, this type of data was valuable in the analysis of the project and assisted in the development of recommendations and considerations for future projects.

#### *Field Observations*

The ICTI project team met immediately following each stakeholder meeting for the purpose of debriefing. All the information collected during the meetings was used to continually evolve the structure of the program. Information packages, letters and updates were developed dependent on the content of the meeting discussions. For example, the organizations requested that reminders be sent via email to keep the training initiative on their work agenda. A newsletter, WEBNEWS, was developed to inform stakeholders of new trainings or programs in response to this request.

***Research Log***

A formal research log was also kept as part of the process. This provided a record of all meetings, sessions, and decisions to accurately reflect the partnership process and project development. Further, it was used in the development of a In-Service Cross-Training Initiative manual.

**DATA ANALYSIS****Procedures**

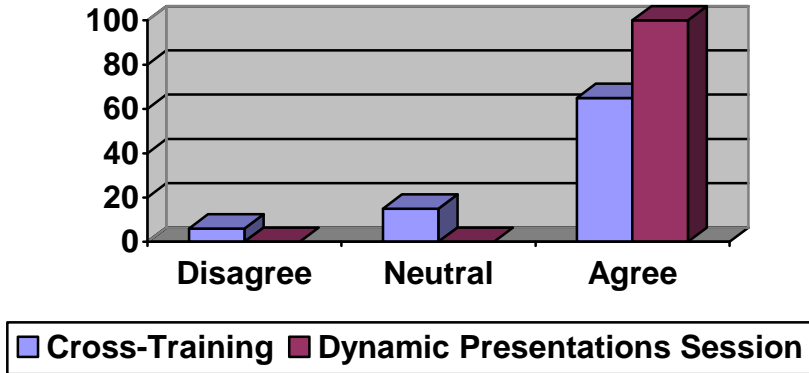
Triangulation or multiple methods of data collection and analysis was used to enhance the design of the program evaluation. Data were collected using multiple sources including participant evaluation forms which included qualitative information, observations, and a research log. The data analysis process was aided by the use of qualitative analysis computer programs including Statistical Package for Social Sciences 11.0 (SPSS 11.0) and QSR NUD\*IST 6. These software packages facilitate the recording and analysis of textual and graphic data.

**DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

Five in-service cross-training workshops were held by the stakeholders involved in the project. The stakeholders completed evaluation forms at the sessions for the cross-training workshops and also at the “Tips for Dynamic Presentations” (TDP) workshop offered by the staff of the Bridging the Service Gap project. The TDP workshop evaluations were completed by 23 participants and 78 participants evaluated the various in-service cross training workshops. In both types of trainings, the participants provided information assessing various aspects of the presentation including the content, knowledge shared/gained, handouts, and networking opportunities or peer contacts. The participants of the evaluation activity were primarily front-line workers (78%). However, some managers or administrators (18%) and a few volunteers/students also participated in the evaluations. The evaluation results of the cross-training workshops and the TDP workshop are shown in Figures 1 to 7. Overall, both the workshop offered by the Bridging the Service Gap staff (i.e. TDP) and the cross-training workshops were rated highly.

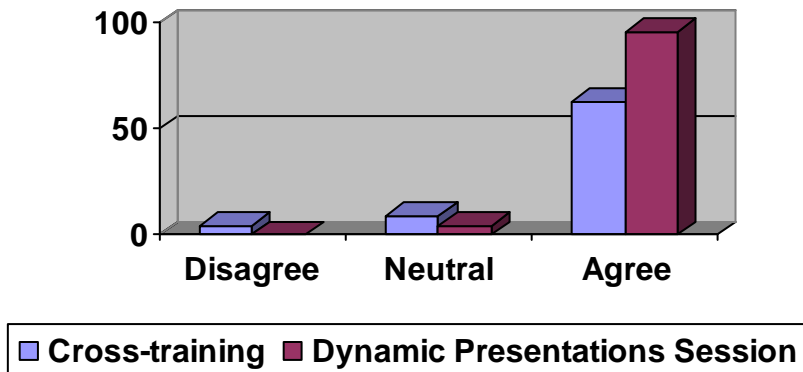
As Figure 1 shows, a strong majority (71%) provided positive ratings of the content of the cross-training presentation attended and agreed that the content was relevant. All TDP participants agreed that the content was relevant. Many cross-training respondents provided written comments that expressed appreciation for the presentation, such as, “Extremely helpful. Awesome!” Similarly, the comments about the TDP workshop noted that excellent information was presented in a well organized, effective manner.

**Figure 1. Rating of Presentations:  
Content**



Nearly all cross-training respondents (81%) and all but one TDP respondent agreed that practical information was provided in the presentation attended (see Figure 2). Open-ended comments reinforced the view that the information was helpful and much appreciated, “Great info”; “Great information. Thanks”; “The information is very relevant”. The participants in the TDP session noted that specific techniques, software (Power Point) and tips were very helpful.

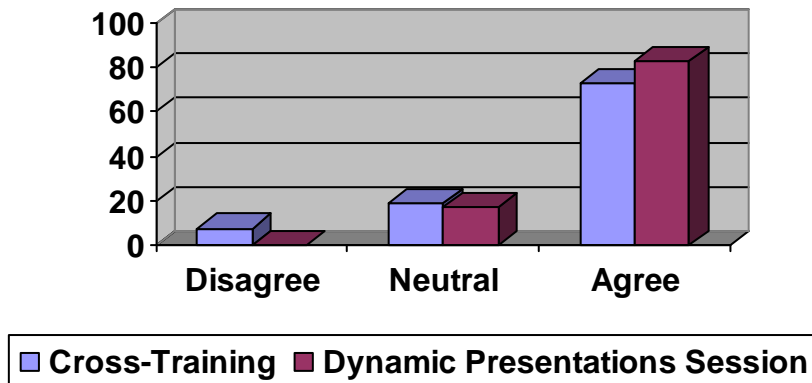
**Figure 2. Rating of Presentations:  
Practical Information Provided**



Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the cross-training respondents and over three-quarters of the TDP participants (83%) stated that they had gained new knowledge by attending the

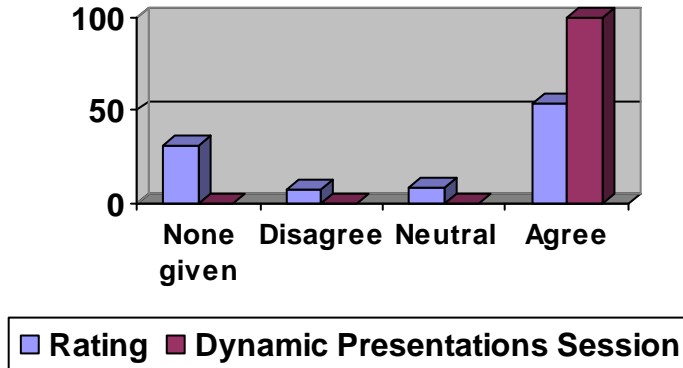
presentation (see Figure 3). The written comments of those who attended cross-training workshops appeared to reflect a new found appreciation for the work of the presenter and/or the organization at which the presenter was employed: “Excellent content” You do good work! A valuable community service.” Another respondent commented, “This hit home. Validated my personal situation and feelings. Thank you.” Participants in the TDP workshop directly stated that they had obtained new information that they would be able to put to good use immediately: “It was good to come to a workshop and learn techniques that I can immediately put into effect.” Another commented that, “The information will be useful, not only for the cross-training sessions, but in other areas of my work. Thank you.”

**Figure 3. Rating of Presentations:  
New Knowledge Gained**



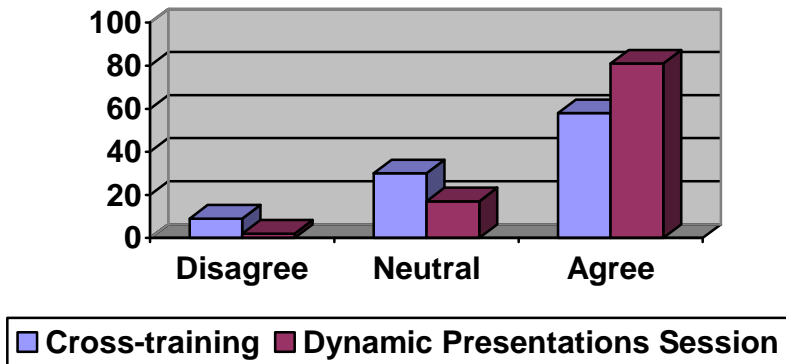
Approximately a third of the cross-training respondents (31%), but none of the TDP respondents, stated that no handouts were provided in the presentation (see Figure 4). Nevertheless, a slight majority (54%) in the cross-training workshops had received handouts that were considered to be a valuable resource. The open-ended comments of the respondents indicated that, in instances when no handouts were provided, they would have liked to have obtained written information such as brochures of the agency or handouts that included a listing of the agency programs.

**Figure 4. Rating of Presentations:  
Handouts a Valuable Resource**



While a substantial proportion of the cross-training respondents (30%) were unsure about or did not see the presentations as providing opportunities for networking with other stakeholders, as shown in Figure 5, over half agreed that the presentation had provided such opportunities (58%). A slightly larger proportion of the TDP participants saw networking opportunities as a benefit of attendance at the workshop. A written comment revealed a cross-training respondent’s recognition of the importance of networking and building connections between organizations by indicating that a program could be improved through the establishment of better connections to other community organizations.

**Figure 5. Rating of Presentations:  
Provided Networking  
Opportunities**



Some participants who did not see the presentation as having provided networking opportunities nevertheless agreed that the presentation had enabled them to make a valuable peer contact (see Figure 6). Close to three-quarters of the cross-training respondents (71%) and over half of the TDP respondents stated that they had made a peer contact in another organization by attending the presentation.

**Figure 6. Rating of Presentations:  
Made a Valuable Peer Contact**

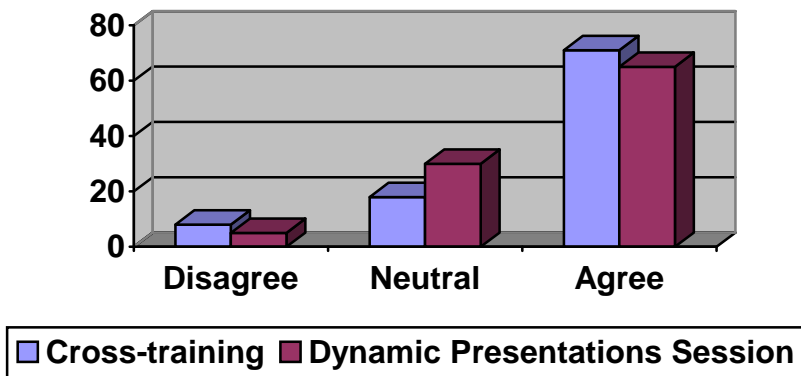
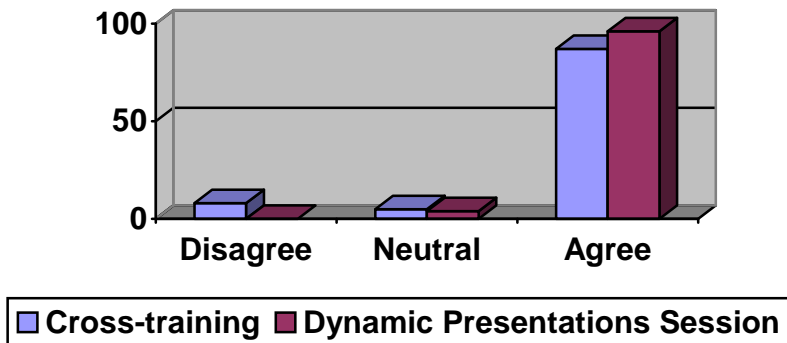


Figure 7 shows that nearly all cross-training (87%) and TDP respondents (96%) indicated that they would recommend the presentation to others. Given the numerous positive comments and complimentary feedback indicating that the presentations were “excellent”, “great”, “very good”, “extremely helpful”, “awesome”, and “very relevant”, perhaps it is not surprising that a very small proportion of the respondents in any of the workshops indicated that they would not recommend the presentations to others.

**Figure 7. Rating of Presentations:  
Would Recommend the  
Presentation to Others**



A short stakeholder survey was conducted to obtain information about the number of workshops scheduled for the cross-training initiative, determine the awareness of front-line staff regarding the trainings and to identify barriers to the scheduling of in-service training workshops. Unfortunately, only six responses were received. However, different types of agencies responded. The results indicated that few workshops had been scheduled, typically only one person in the agency was designated as being responsible for scheduling workshops, and that most frontline staff in the agency were aware of the cross-training initiative. The open-ended comments provided some indication of the reasons why only a limited number of training sessions had been offered. The barriers pertained primarily to practical issues such as the timing of staff meetings, staff reductions and the heavy work demands for clinical staff. A few respondents stated that they were interested in participating in the in-service cross-training initiative but they did not cite specific barriers to participation in it.

As the results reported above indicate, the relatively small number of cross-training workshops offered by stakeholders was not an indication that the training sessions were not well received. Rather, it seems that resource limitations and time constraints for staff were the central reasons for the small number of sessions held. The minutes of stakeholder meetings also indicated that some turnover among agency managers may have had an impact on the cross-training initiative. It was further noted that most stakeholders had already established training relationships between the organizations in the pilot group. These organizations used their long-established patterns of informal communications regarding training opportunities, rather than using the cross-training website as a mechanism for sharing information. Several training workshops had been held but these sessions were not registered in the website. The process for registering the sessions in the website was seen as an extra step and additional work for the agency.

The minutes of stakeholder meetings also show that other organizations in the community had expressed an interest in joining the cross-training initiative. Unfortunately, these organizations had been informed that participation was limited to the stakeholder group. It was recommended that the project be opened up to a broader cross-section of community organizations and to add new topics to the inventory of training workshops that could be offered. As a result, additional agencies were contacted to determine interest in participation in the cross-training initiative. The interest expressed by other community agencies reveals that the cross-training initiative had the potential to be helpful to the community but that barriers to participation had to be resolved. The additional effort on the part of the Bridging the Service Gap staff to bring a larger number of organizations into the stakeholder group was ultimately unsuccessful in generating new cross-training sessions.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The *In-Service Cross-Training Initiative* (ICTI) was developed on the basis of a need in the community that was identified through extensive consultation. The year 1 study conducted for the *Bridging the Service Gap* (BTSG) project clearly indicated the need for front-line workers to have additional training in order to effectively serve clients with a history of sexual trauma and mental illness. The ICTI project inputs were substantial in that the staff conceptualized, developed and implemented a highly structured, yet flexible program supported by communications strategies, program materials and a user-friendly website. Despite these efforts, most stakeholder agencies did not use the ICTI. The main barriers appeared to relate to resource limitations within agencies and the existing, heavy demands on staff time. These barriers prevented the stakeholders from investing time in using the elements of the ICTI, including the website. Instead of incorporating the new ICTI resource as a means of enhancing communications and links to other agencies, the stakeholder group tended to rely on their longstanding patterns of informal communications with each other.

Evaluation of the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative indicates that, in certain respects, the program staff persons were able to accomplish the goals of the program. The training sessions that were offered were rated highly in terms of content, relevance, and opportunities for networking. Those attending the workshops gained new knowledge that they could use to benefit clients of the agency. The ICTI staff developed a model and materials that can be used to guide the development of similar initiatives in the future. In addition, the host agency, the Sexual Assault Survivors' Centre, Sarnia-Lambton, will continue to host and maintain the website. Furthermore, the indication that the cross-training initiative will be expanded to include additional community organizations is promising. Community interest in the initiative remains strong. However, further investment is needed to address the barriers associated with the pressures on agencies and the limited capacity to adopt new modes of communications when planning for in-service training.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based on information provided by the stakeholders who participated in the In-Service Cross-Training Initiative (ICTI).

- 1) Explore strategies to ensure that the inventory of training sessions is comprehensive, continually updated and includes the types of training sessions that agencies require and are seeking (i.e. ensure that agency personnel generate the inventory).
- 2) Determine how training sessions can be organized quickly when an issue arises or an event occurs in the community.
- 3) Seek additional funding to ensure that the website can be maintained and continually updated.

- 4) Determine how the ICTI can be widely advertised (e.g. using posters, bulletin boards and bookmark campaigns in order to disseminate information to schools, churches and other community organizations).
- 5) Determine the optimal size of the stakeholder group to be included in the ICTI and include as many agencies as is feasible.
- 6) Determine how managers in agencies can be encouraged to provide information about the ICTI and the website to front-line agency staff and to agency volunteers.
- 7) Determine how turnover in management and staff within agencies may impact on the internal organizational knowledge about the ICTI and develop strategies to address this barrier to participation.
- 8) Explore the benefits of the ICTI among small agencies with a small number of staff persons and determine how to facilitate participation (e.g. by ensuring that agencies understand that only very limited agency resources are required by the ICTI process).
- 9) Recognize that there may be periods of time—such as fiscal year-end, holidays or periods of peak service demands—when agencies will not schedule training sessions.
- 10) Explore ways in which the existing, informal patterns of communication between community agencies can be incorporated into the formal processes for the ICTI.

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