



# JUST LIKE A GIRL YOU KNOW CAMPAIGN FINAL UPDATE

Fall 2021



**Since the launch of our anti-trafficking programs, you have helped ensure that more than 330 girls have received vital support. Because of you, young women have access to the health care, counselling, housing services and other critical supports they need to recover and heal from intensive trauma.**

**This report summarizes the progress that we have made since we embarked on this important work and our *Just Like a Girl You Know* campaign. Together, we have accomplished so much and helped many young women on their own journeys to recovery and healing. Thank you for being leading supporters of our efforts to combat sex trafficking – we could not do it without you.**

Over the years, we continue to see the immense value in and importance of this work. No girl ever chooses to be trafficked. And yet, sex trafficking is a growing public issue and a largely domestic crime. Ninety percent of the sex trafficking survivors Covenant House supports are Canadian citizens.

Every day, young women are relying on us for vital support. Other community agencies continue to turn to us as leaders in this field, seeking our expertise, knowledge and best practices. This work is far from complete and we will continue to deliver on our plan and respond to the growing issue of sex trafficking. We will continue to advocate for the victims of this horrific crime and help ensure that they have the care, services and supports that they need to help them on their journey to recovery as well as continue to help all girls protect themselves through education and awareness.

Thanks to your generosity, Covenant House has put into action and delivered on a comprehensive plan to combat sex-trafficking in our City. Our plan focused on three main pillars:

1. Prevention and Early Intervention: to reduce the incidence of sex trafficking.
2. Direct Services to Victims: provide trauma-informed care for victims of sexual exploitation from crisis intervention to independent living.
3. Learning and the Transfer of Knowledge: invest in promising practices and building a central knowledge base.

## PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION

When Covenant House developed its anti-trafficking plan, we knew that prevention and early intervention was integral to a long-term solution against sex trafficking. It is more than simply creating awareness of the issue; it is about changing behaviour.

Sex trafficking is a complex issue for many people to comprehend and often it is not talked about. There are many factors that make young people particularly vulnerable to be trafficked and girls as young as 13, and on average 17 are victims of this crime. Many survivors have told us that at the time, they did not understand what was happening to them nor did they have the words to describe it or know where to turn for help.

Our prevention strategy aims to equip and empower young people to recognize the warnings signs, reach out for help and support survivors in their journey.

A large part of prevention and early intervention is education. The objective is to have more people recognize sex trafficking as a real, local issue and get talking about it. Secondly, they need to be aware of the red flags and warning signs so that teen girls and parents can recognize them for themselves, their friends and their children, so they can seek help.

Our prevention and early intervention efforts focus on delivering programs directly to at-risk girls (as young as 12-13) and those involved with child welfare, parents and guardians and to organizations and businesses who may come in contact with a victim in need of support. This includes community training programs, in-school educational programs, social media campaigns and the development of online resources including *Traffick Stop*.

Your generous commitment helped make the following achievements in the area of Prevention and Early Intervention possible:

- ✓ In 2016, we launched a new sex trafficking presentation called *Trafficked* as part of our in-school education program for grades 6-12. To date, we have reached 27,609 students.
- ✓ We built a teaching guide and curriculum for teachers to deliver in class called *Sex Trafficking 101*. This information is being shared with the government and their mandate to have curriculum on this issue in schools.
- ✓ Expanded our sex trafficking prevention presentations to broader groups – child welfare, law enforcement and professionals from the legal sector and hospitality industry. To date, we have delivered 245 training sessions to 125 different workplaces and organizations.
- ✓ In 2020, Covenant House launched Shoppable Girls – an eye-catching four-week campaign to raise awareness and start the dialogue about sex trafficking amongst teens, caregivers and the general public.

Still to come:

- ✓ Phase II of our anti-trafficking media ad campaigns called Let's talk about Sex Trafficking – will build on the momentum built by Shoppable Girls. This campaign will focus on education and building an increased understanding of the red flags in the luring process.

Through our work, we've learned awareness and education are key to protecting young people. We will continue to talk about the issue of sex trafficking in the hopes of preventing others from becoming a victim of this crime. We are also relying on you, and our community of dedicated supporters, to continue the conversation and share your knowledge with others to help us increase awareness and ensure that people are equipped with the information and tools they need to get help for themselves or someone else.

## DIRECT SERVICES TO VICTIMS

In Canada there are very few services, supports and resources for girls who have been sexually exploited or trafficked. With Ontario's new anti-human trafficking Bill 251, we have started to see an increase in available programs and services for victims. When Covenant House started its anti-sex trafficking plan, we were seeing a significant increase in the number of victims on our case load and the local police needed more community supports to help these girls.

The trauma these young women have endured is tremendous and they require compassionate, specialized, trauma-informed care to recover from what they have experienced, and wraparound supports to help them move forward with their lives.

Covenant House was identified as a leading organization by community members to provide vital services to sex trafficking victims and we developed our urban response model to offer a range of services focused on helping girls transition to independence.

These include crisis intervention, stabilization, transitional housing, supporting girls with employment and education goals, health care including mental health and addictions supports, counselling and self-care, legal support and prosecution, life skills and the gradual re-integration into the community for those who are ready for independence.

The opening of **The Rogers Home** in 2016 was a significant milestone in our plan to provide direct services to victims. This transitional housing program for survivors of sex trafficking offers support to young women who have exited their exploitative situations and are committed to a journey of recovery. It offers young women safety and security, an opportunity to prepare for independent living and support with their personal goals all while addressing the trauma they have experienced.

Your generous commitment helped ensure that victims of sex trafficking have the necessary housing programs, health care, counselling and critical one-on-one supports to help wherever they may be in their journey.

Some key achievements in the area of Direct Services to Victims include:

- ✓ Responding to sex trafficking survivors' individual needs with immediacy – housing options, medical and mental health care, help navigating the system/institutions/criminal justice, education, employment, getting tattoos and online images removed, among other emotional needs – rediscovering oneself, planning for the future, navigating relationships with family and addressing trauma.
- ✓ Opened **The Rogers Home** in 2016, a two-year transitional housing program for survivors of sex trafficking. Since its opening, this housing program has helped 24 young women.
- ✓ Recognized the need for emergency, crisis beds and added two designated beds in our shelter for young women experiencing sex trafficking to find safety in 2015. Since then, 129 girls have accessed these beds.

- ✓ Identified a need for a more robust crisis and stabilization program, separate from our shelter, and opened our short-term residence for victims of sex trafficking, the **Avdell Home**, in 2018. Since its opening, this housing program has helped 33 young women.
- ✓ Expanded our team of Human Trafficking Advocates and added new supports including a Youth in Transition Worker for Human Trafficking, Trauma Therapist, a Health Promotion Coordinator and a Family and Natural Supports Worker.
- ✓ Court and legal support – available to all youth but not every girl chooses to pursue legal action against their abusers or traffickers; one Advocate says: “It’s certainly an option, and it’s something that we discuss. And there’s a lot of different legal options that we can offer the young person”.

Every day our dedicated team is inspired by the young women who come to us for support. We are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their journey to recovery and see the remarkable progress, however small, they make on a daily basis. Thank you for enabling us to be here, supporting these girls with the programs and services that you helped make possible.

“Sex trafficking survivors have been forced to endure unspeakable acts. So it’s important to remember that we are talking about real people and not imaginary stories or data points, we are talking about human beings. The stories of these remarkable young people are about resilience and courage...The relationships that we have been able to develop with survivors of sex trafficking has been life altering for them, and for us. Every day we see little glimpses of progress and healing. These are moments of hope.”

---

Julie, Anti-Human Trafficking Services Manager

The Rogers Home provides a sense of belonging and community to the young women living there. An alumni youth from the program describes it as, “It was more like a home environment, a lot of it was more self-facilitated which I think is empowering for people...I wouldn’t be where I am today without the program or be as independent as I am now. There are still things that I remember from [the Rogers Home] that I carry forward. It’s a good program. It’s a useful program. It was needed!”

---

Alumni Youth, The Rogers Home

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Responding to the issue of sex trafficking in Canada is relatively new; as such we have had to move through uncharted territory, with little evidence to guide us. The work we have done under the Research and Evaluation pillar has been essential to our anti-trafficking work.

Covenant House has become a well-known leader in the field for our research on sex-trafficking, demonstrated leadership and our work has contributed to the limited knowledge base on the issue. Through research, we have developed relationships across the country with various stakeholders including service providers and survivors that helped deepen our knowledge.

All of the work Covenant House has done to combat sex trafficking is guided by research and ongoing evaluations of our programs and services to ensure best or promising practice. We have gained a critical understanding of how the experiences of survivors need to be addressed properly through compassionate care and relentless engagement. This work has been critical to the success of program delivery.

Through our various research and evaluation projects, we have learned so much and shared our findings with the broader community that will help strengthen the available supports to victims. We have helped identify where there are gaps in services so that we can continue to close them either through our own program delivery or through partnerships with others.

### Summary of our key learnings:

- We know more about what interventions work for survivors, based on where they are at (exiting/level of crisis) and the need for various interventions based on the stage of their journey.
- We are learning more about the complexities of working from a trauma-informed perspective, and how intense this work can be, particularly when survivors are presenting with severe trauma.
- An ongoing and built-in evaluation process is key to improve program delivery.
- Our research is stronger when we engage survivors more actively in every aspect.
- On a national scope, we have learned about the multiple and complex barriers that survivors face when escaping traffickers, outlining the need for more awareness and prevention; we have learned more about the facilitating factors that support survivors when escaping.

Without research and evaluation, we wouldn't be where we are today. Your commitment helped enable us to do this work and do it well. Thank you for understanding the importance of a strong knowledge base to help combat sex trafficking – not only for the victims that come to Covenant House but those across the country and beyond. When we share our research and help educate others, we can all work together to help put an end to sex trafficking.

Below is a list of some of the research projects we have completed to date and continue to work on. Our research and evaluation will continue as it is never truly 'complete', there is always more to learn so that we can best serve these young women.

Completed Research Projects:

- ✓ Crisis Beds Evaluations & Crisis Bed Program Review – this research supported the opening of the Avdell Home
- ✓ Evaluation of our Emergency Crisis 24/7 Response Network
- ✓ Needs Assessment Community-Based Participatory Action Research – helped to identify the gaps in services and what additional partners to explore
- ✓ The Rogers Home and the Avdell Home Implementation Evaluations
- ✓ Getting Out: A National Framework for Escaping Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Canada
- ✓ IPSOS Public Affairs and Covenant House survey – helped guide our prevention strategy and development of *Traffick Stop* and our mass awareness campaigns

Traffick Stop:

- ✓ Launched in 2020, this robust website of online resources available for caregivers, front-line service providers and industry employees to help build awareness through education and training
- ✓ The resources on this site are based on our work with over 200 young women and learnings from the implementation of our anti-trafficking plan

In Progress/Future Research Projects:

- ✓ Urban Response Model
- ✓ Trauma-Informed Research Projects in partnership with Dr. Nina Vitopolous, psychologist at CAMH
- ✓ Awarded funding by Making the Shift's Centre of Excellence to investigate the intersection between youth homelessness and sex trafficking

**You have been with us on this journey since the beginning and we are deeply grateful for your generous commitment. You have helped us achieve so much and all to help support and better the lives of young women who have been trafficked. Every day we are thankful for your generosity and for trusting us with your support.**

**Since 2015 we have accomplished so much but for Covenant House, the work will continue for many years to come. For nearly forty years, we have worked with victims of sex trafficking. We remain committed to this important work and all the young women who come to us for help.**

**As we witness these young women finding their place and moving forward in their lives, we are seeing firsthand the impact of your investment. Thank you!**

# OUR FIGHT AGAINST SEX TRAFFICKING



## 2015

City of Toronto approved the development of specialized housing and crisis beds for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Added two emergency crisis beds within our shelter specifically for sex trafficking victims seeking safety.

Launched "Trafficked", our in-school presentation for students grades 7-12.

Ontario announced \$72M and built a provincial anti-human trafficking strategy.

## 2017

Expanded our sex trafficking prevention presentations and training to broader audiences.

## 2018

IPSOS Public Affairs and Covenant House survey of teen girls. The insights helped guide our prevention and awareness strategy.



## 2020

Launched our online resource hub.

Continued to provide 24-7 to victims of sex trafficking during COVID-19.

## FOREVER GRATEFUL

For your commitment to this important work and all you continue to do to support victims.

## 2013

Covenant House Toronto alongside other community leaders identified a need for a specialized housing program for victims of sex trafficking.

Launched an online petition urging the Ontario government to better coordinate its efforts to combat this crime. More than 10,800 Ontario residents signed this petition.

## 2016

Developed our Urban Response Model anti-trafficking plan and launched our Just Like a Girl You Know campaign to support it.

Opened our transitional housing program for victims of sex trafficking, The Rogers Home.



Conducted a thorough evaluation of our pilot crisis bed program and learnings led to the opening of the Avdell Home.

Opened our short-term housing program for victims of sex trafficking.



Launched Shoppable Girls, a sex trafficking awareness and prevention ad campaign.

## 2021 & BEYOND

For nearly 40 years, we have worked with victims of sex trafficking. We remain committed to this work and all the young women who come to us for support.