



# No One Deserves To Be Abused: An inquiry to inform the development of supports for affluent survivors

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Highlights from a Literature Review, Environmental Scan & Qualitative  
Research

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## 1.0 Introduction

In 2016, Sagesse identified a gap in services and supports for affluent women who are experiencing domestic violence (DV). This gap is not unique to Calgary; upscale violence is often overlooked by service providers and researchers in other jurisdictions as well (Weitzman, 2008; Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016). The experiences of affluent survivors are rarely studied or acknowledged in the DV literature, and service providers often fail to see the vulnerability of this population because they are not accustomed to associating risk or helplessness with privileged populations (Berg, 2014). While upscale violence<sup>1</sup> shares many characteristics with DV among less affluent populations, some barriers, circumstances and cultural influences are unique to affluent women. Because these factors can have a powerful impact on the needs and help-seeking behaviors of affluent survivors, they must be considered in the design and delivery of DV services and supports.

With this in mind, Sagesse contracted an external consulting team to conduct research on upscale violence. Our team was tasked with developing a profile of DV among this demographic, identifying barriers and enablers for accessing services, and conducting a scan of programs and supports for this population in other jurisdictions. Three key research questions guided our work:

- What do we know about the profile of affluent women<sup>2</sup> who experience DV?
- What barriers does this population face in accessing services and supports?
- What types of services and supports have been effective, and why?

The research involved three key components:

1. **A literature review:** We reviewed articles on upscale violence, the culture of affluence, and socio-economic status (SES) as it relates to DV.
2. **An environmental scan:** Interviews were conducted with researchers and service providers who have experience with this population; relevant website material was also reviewed.
3. **Qualitative research:** We conducted qualitative research (one focus group and one interview) with women with lived experience in Calgary. As this population can be difficult to access, we also conducted interviews with family lawyers who serve this population.

This report offers highlights from each of these components. As the themes that emerged from all three components were very similar in nature, we have chosen to synthesize the findings from each method and organize the report around the research questions.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “upscale violence” was coined by Weitzman (2000) to describe domestic violence (DV) experienced by affluent women.

<sup>2</sup> Note: While men, transgender and non-binary individuals can also be survivors of domestic violence, this project focused exclusively on women as the services being developed by Sagesse are designed to target that population.

## 2.0 Methods

A brief **literature review** was conducted to identify key articles related to upscale violence. Despite a fairly thorough search process (please see Appendix A for details), the search resulted in only 12 articles, one PhD dissertation, and a book. Of these, six were specific to upscale violence and the remainder were related to the culture of affluence, help-seeking behaviour in DV, and socioeconomic status in relation to DV. The lack of published articles in this area was confirmed by the researchers we spoke with, one of whom said that she was aware of only two studies of upscale violence.

The **environmental scan** involved both a review of information and programs that could be found online, as well as interviews with key informants<sup>3</sup> (n=6). A snowball sampling technique was used (that is, key informants suggested other potential interviewees and resources). The final list of informants was developed in collaboration with Sagesse and included five providers who work directly with affluent women who have experienced DV and three researchers working in the field of upscale violence. (Two of the researchers did not make themselves available for an interview).

We also conducted **qualitative research** with affluent survivors in Calgary order to better understand their unique perspectives and service requirements. Participants were recruited via an email to Sagesse's existing networks. We also sent a recruiting poster to a few Calgary-based family lawyers who work with affluent women, asking them to let their clients know about the study. Unfortunately, the sample of women who participated in the study was very small (n=4), with three women participating in a focus group and one opting for a telephone interview. Both the focus group and interview were based on a semi-structured guide (Appendix B). Telephone interviews were also conducted with two family lawyers to gather their perspectives on the experiences of the affluent survivors that they have worked with. (See Appendix C for the interview guide used in our conversations with lawyers).

**Note:** Findings from the literature, environmental scan and qualitative research are presented together in the sections that follow.

## 3.0 Defining upscale violence

The term “upscale violence” was originated by Weitzman who defined the term as:

*[E]motional or physical abuse or violence, reported or non-reported, among families of upper educated and upper income status, or people of means. Basically, domestic abuse among people with higher education and/or from upper income families who live ‘enviable lifestyles’ where one would not characteristically expect to see abuse.*

(Weitzman, 2013, p. 2)

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<sup>3</sup> By “key informants,” we mean individuals who have considerable practice experience with this population and/or have conducted research in this area.

Weitzman's 2013 definition differs from an earlier one where she specified income level and neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> While she does not offer a rationale for the changes, the move away from a specific income level is consistent with findings from the key informant interviews: All of the interviewees noted that assigning a particular income criterion for upscale violence is unhelpful. Instead, they suggested that definitions of upscale violence be based on having experienced domestic violence and self-identifying in one or more of the following ways:

- Affluent
- Powerful
- Highly educated
- Upwardly mobile
- Successful in a white-collar career

*These women self-identify as being wealthy ... There is no income cutoff ... We don't have a number. What we typically see is these are college educated, upwardly mobile professionals who consider themselves to be in the high SES group.* (Key Informant)

*Don't even worry about income. I target women with some degree of education ...who are successful in their careers – wherever there is power and money and the ability to abuse either of those. I wouldn't put a dollar figure on it.* (Key Informant)

This was further supported by the qualitative research. One of the women with lived experience said that she “went up and down in terms of money,” so income level might not be as reliable a marker of upscale violence as identifying with a culture of affluence or being highly educated.

Interestingly, the term ‘upscale violence’ was never used by any of the key informants we interviewed. Terms such as ‘affluent women’ and ‘women of means’ were more common.

Regardless of the specific term used, it is important that violence in affluent communities is explicitly named: Weitzman argues that affluent women do not see themselves in the terms that are often used to describe victims of domestic violence, and that this can lead them to normalize, compartmentalize or diminish their experience.

*I believe that our society's lack of imagery and terminology to describe spousal abuse in its upper socioeconomic echelons has helped reinforce the isolation that many of these women feel. Clearly, many affluent abused wives... don't identify with the media-generated portrait of the 'battered woman.' And since they don't have words or images to put to their experience, they come to perceive that their torment lacks validity - as if it never really happened, or it wasn't all that bad, or it wasn't really 'abusive.' This diminishment, in turn, feeds their ability to compartmentalize this experience - until the*

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<sup>4</sup> Weitzman's earlier definition of upscale violence was: “multiple or continued episodes of emotional and/or physical abuse within the marriage and... at least three of the following criteria: *Income*: a combined marital income of at least \$100,000 per year; *Residence*: marital residence in a neighbourhood ranked in the top 25 percent of its statewide area...; *Class Status*: a self-perception of being upper-middle class or upper-class; *Education*: a minimum of a bachelor's degree” (Weitzman, 2000, pg. 19).

*mistreatment spirals out of control and reaches wildly dangerous levels that they are no longer able to keep secret or deny.* (Weitzman, 2000, p. 18)

Weitzman asked one woman whether she could have more easily identified and acted upon her experience of domestic violence if there had been a name for it. Her response was: *“Absolutely”* (p. 18). This underscores the importance of acknowledging the unique experiences of this population in the discourse of the DV sector, and ensuring that the terms we use resonate with them.<sup>5</sup>

## 4.0 Profile: What do we know about DV in affluent communities?

In this section, we profile affluent survivors and abusers, and discuss ways that violence manifests among wealthier populations.

### 4.1 Culture of Affluence

This population cannot be understood without some appreciation for the culture of affluence in which they are embedded. The term *culture of affluence* refers to *“a set of explicit and implicit beliefs and values in affluent communities that influence how children are socialized, community members interact, and society views affluence”* (Levine, 2006, cited in Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016, p. 3). Despite the obvious benefits associated with high levels of privilege and wealth, some of the values associated with this culture can negatively impact individual health and wellbeing. These include: materialism, competition, perfectionism, privacy, and maintenance of status. Luthar (2003) notes that the culture of affluence contributes to social isolation even amongst those not experiencing DV through the following mechanisms:

- Material wealth reduces the need to depend on friends and neighbours: *“The rich are the least likely to experience the security of deep social connectedness that is routinely*

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<sup>5</sup> Berg (2014) offers a different perspective on the use of a class-specific term, suggesting that this approach is likely to further perpetuate existing stereotypes and marginalize disadvantaged women: *“Weitzman (2000) has pointed out that many [affluent] battered women... do not recognize ‘domestic violence’ in their lives due to their acceptance of stereotypes about women who are abused. Their privilege fosters projection-externalization in which the harm of domestic violence in their own lives is overlooked and this abuse is seen only as an issue affecting women with less status in society.... This internalized sense of superiority is not only harmful to dominant culture women; it further oppresses more marginalized women by perpetuating stereotypes. Internalized privilege prevents many dominant culture women from identifying with marginalized women who have survived comparable trauma. Weitzman advocates that the field of social work popularize the term ‘upscale violence,’ so that middle- and upper-class women more readily seek services. Throughout her many interviews on upscale marital abuse, women repeatedly identified with ‘upscale violence’ and felt distanced from the term ‘domestic violence.’ This population of women recognized that they would be more receptive to identifying the seriousness of their problems if a class-specific term was used. It is to their detriment that many would respond to this classist term, one that distances them from other battered women and risks further marginalizing already disadvantaged women, rather than challenge the stereotype and acknowledge the existence of domestic violence in dominant culture”* (pg. 149).

*enjoyed by people in communities where mutual dependence is often unavoidable”*  
(Luthar, 2003, p. 6).

- The physical design of affluent neighbourhoods can contribute to feelings of isolation: Houses are often set far apart with privacy ensured by long driveways, high hedges and sprawling lawns. Neighbours are less likely to bump into each other as they come and go.
- The culture of affluence also carries the message that 1) affluence brings happiness, and those who are unhappy must be ungrateful and self-indulgent, and 2) the rich have no right to feel depressed or emotionally deprived. These messages can exacerbate feelings of isolation and alienation (Luthar, 2003).

Judgment and blame by members of an affluent community is often fierce. While DV can carry stigma at any social strata, members of affluent communities often assume that DV doesn't happen to 'people like us' (Weitzman, 2013; 2000). Combined with some of the cultural values discussed above (e.g., perfectionism, privacy, and maintenance of status), this can lead to the survivor being ostracized by her friends and family.

Leaving an affluent marriage because of abuse often entails having to choose a new lifestyle and social circle. Survivors may be giving up their wealth, and often lose their position in society. Thus, the decision to leave is fraught with issues related to identity, community, status and lifestyle. (This is discussed further in *Barriers and Enablers*, below).

*The most striking thing that differentiates affluent women from women of lesser means is that they are less likely to self-identify as being abused. Partly as a result of the need to maintain an image associated with higher socioeconomic status and maintain an aura of being in control or perfect. And there is a higher need to not do anything that would jeopardize their socioeconomic wellbeing. More so than those who have less – because they have less to worry about [in that respect]. Women who come from relationships of economic dependence are hugely fearful of losing it. And economic abuse is almost always part of the package. (Family Lawyer)*

*I think women of lesser means are actually more resilient than affluent women. If you've always rented, and you've changed houses every couple of years, change doesn't scare you. If all you've known is financial stability and every want and need has been looked after financially, the idea of stepping into a world where everything is at risk is a pretty huge leap. (Family Lawyer)*

Haselschwerdt and Hardesty (2016) distinguish between two groups of DV survivors within affluent communities: those women who are married to high status men and come from 'old money', and those who are married to men with less status in the community. For the latter, the family wealth is not as salient to their identity, and they are less likely to 'buy in' to the culture of affluence. This typically allows them to disclose earlier in the process, whereas women whose identities are tightly integrated with the culture of affluence manage secrecy and disclosure

differently. (This is discussed further in *Barriers and Enablers*, below). Their study suggests that this population needs to be segmented and understood in more nuanced ways. Differences likely exist between the old money and new money, as well as ultra-rich, wealthy, and upwardly mobile populations.

## 4.2 Prevalence

The prevalence of domestic violence among affluent communities is very difficult to judge. While the literature indicates that DV is more commonly reported in populations with a lower socioeconomic status, Haselschwerdt and Hardesty (2016) point out that these studies “often rely on agency samples that over-represent women with fewer resources and fail to consider the pervasive norms of secrecy and family unity around DV in affluent communities that likely limit study participation” (p. 1). Weitzman (2000) states that approximately 50% of the women she treated in her private psychology practice in Chicago were experiencing some form of domestic violence (p. 6), suggesting that rates of violence among the affluent are probably grossly underreported. Some of the reasons for under-reporting include:

- **Cultural values:** As discussed above, affluent communities emphasize privacy, perfectionism and maintenance of status.
- **Living arrangements:** Unlike low income people who usually live in very close proximity, the wealthy are often situated in private houses on large lots. Therefore, the neighbours are less likely to hear signs of domestic violence and notify the police.
- **Prominence:** Affluent abusers often have some prominence within the community. One of the lawyers we spoke with said that women are often very reluctant to allow lawyers to raise DV in their trials because court documents are public, and the media is likely to investigate when the couple is well known.

*They're less likely to want to talk about it. Even if they talk about it with a lawyer, they don't want it talked about with anyone else, even when it is relevant to their case. Here's the problem: Anything that gets put into court documents is public – they're changing that soon hopefully – but at this point, any member of the public or the media can access those documents. That's problem #1....The second problem is if you do go to court, the judge's written decision becomes public – all the details that the judge writes about is searchable online by way of the web. So someone does a Google Search of your name and the first thing that comes up tells your family story about what's gone on behind closed doors. You combine that with an increased sensitivity. That kind of exposure is uncomfortable for anyone but it's worse for them because of their social status, so they're less likely to disclose. (Family Lawyer)*

## 4.3 Survivor/Perpetrator Profiles and Etiology of Violence

While the research in this area is very limited, qualitative studies suggest that there may be a number of important differences in the profile and etiology of violence among affluent women.

Most of the differences outlined below also emerged as strong themes in both the key informant interviews and qualitative research.

Violence in affluent communities may differ in the following ways:

- Women of affluence often have little to no experience of violence prior to their marriage (i.e., they did not witness violence in their family of origin or in past relationships) (Weitzman, 2000).

*...very few of the abused women I have met over the years experienced abuse in their childhoods or witnessed it between their parents. In fact, it is this lack of experience with violence, rage, and abuse that makes this woman even more overwhelmed and unclear about how to cope with something so alien to her and the people in her universe. (Weitzman, 2000, p. 15)*

- The contrition or ‘honeymoon phase’ commonly associated with the cycle of violence is less likely to happen with this population.

*The abusive husband rarely shows remorse and is uncommonly unapologetic. He believes he has been wronged, justifying his unreasonable expectations, narcissistic entitlement and vitriolic attacks. (Weitzman, 2013, p. 5).*

- Affluent women are often highly educated, high achievers, and/or very competent professionally, and these qualities often lead them to believe that they should be able to fix the situation (Weitzman, 2013). This inflated sense of self-efficacy among some affluent women is a sharp contrast with the ‘learned helplessness’ that can characterize survivors within other socioeconomic strata (Weitzman, 2000).

*Ego and image get in the way. As successful woman, you think you can fix everything. (Survivor)*

*The smarter a woman is and the more empathy she has for him, the longer she’s likely to stay. Thinking there’s something she’s done to trigger him and that there’s something she can do to fix him. But neither one of those things is true. (Key Informant)*

- Higher levels of education and professional success can also lead women to feel that they ‘should have known better’ or been smart enough to read the signs. Often, this engenders a deep sense of humiliation or shame, and they fear looking naïve or foolish for having chosen an abusive husband (Weitzman, 2000).

*I couldn’t tell anyone what was going on – I am educated, have a graduate degree, professionally, I feel very competent. I flew all over the world on contracts – but I can’t manage my own life?! (Survivor)*

*I didn’t go for counselling for the abuse because... I have a master’s degree and it’s like ‘don’t you have a brain in your head? How could you hook up with another*

*guy who's even worse?' (Survivor who had experienced two abusive relationships)*

- In the DV literature, traumatic bonding is often used to “explain the inexplicable bond that is formed between a woman and her abusive partner” (Weitzman 2000, p. 14); however, affluent women often report more attachment to their *lifestyle* than to their abuser (Weitzman 2000).

*The higher you are and the longer you've been there, the further you fall and the harder it is to leave.... There's a whole population of women suffering silently and sucking it up because they have so much to lose. (Key Informant)*

- Because of cultural norms around privacy and shame associated with the idea that violence doesn't happen in affluent communities, survivors are far less likely to notify the police. This can have significant implications for their court proceedings (assuming they allow the lawyer to even raise the issue) as there is no documentation of abuse.

*Then there's that shame attached to it that makes it very hard for a woman to reach out, call the police, visit a DV agency or talk to a therapist, or their own doctor. And because they haven't done that, then there's no paper trail. And when they go to family court, it's a different standard from criminal court. It often turns into 'he said; she said' and without that evidence ... it makes it very hard for her to get the kind of justice that's her due. (Key informant)*

- Abusers are often highly educated and/or have high social standing in the community. They are therefore viewed as highly credible, 'pillars of the community.' Because those who know them are often reluctant to associate them with any negative attributes, they are less likely to believe the survivor's reports of violence.

*I tried to talk to the neighbour, but no one believed me... My husband was telling them that I was schizophrenic. He had a lot of credibility, [...] so everyone believed him. No one believed me. They said 'This couldn't happen to you.' After a while I began to think maybe I am crazy. (Survivor)*

*Often, they're not believed in their social circles – the abuser is often prominent, holds power and money – and people are more apt to pay attention to that. (Key Informant)*

*He comes in [to court] with his credentials, a PhD or MD after his name, and he coaches the kids' soccer team and he serves on a board with agencies, and he's made to look like the good guy, and she starts to look kind of crazy and unbelievable after a while. It's just - it makes it very hard for her to get the kind of justice that's her due. (Key Informant)*

*How do you get around a husband who's the politician, who runs the town...when your husband knows everybody and owns a lot of people... (Key Informant)*

- People within the helping professions often assume that women of affluence have the resources to manage their problems and escape the abuse (Berg, 2014; Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016); however, in many cases, the abuser has full control of the financial resources (Weitzman, 2000; Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016). Furthermore, as Weitzman (2000) points out, *“lack of resources cannot always be measured economically”* (p. 11).

*You might be from an affluent marriage and have no money. It's not worth your while to keep fighting and sapping your strength to keep on fighting. You know you could get more, but you just think 'I have to get out.'* (Survivor)

*'My client may be driving a \$60,000 car, but she has \$20 in [her] wallet... She may have the appearance of money, but in reality, she [has nothing].'* (Private Practitioner, cited in Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016)

#### 4.4 Ways that Domestic Violence Manifests in Affluent Communities

One of the ways in which violence in affluent communities distinguishes itself is the level of sophistication: Because affluent perpetrators have higher levels of power, resources and education on which to draw, their weapons can be all the more subtle and powerful. This kind of abuse can be harder for survivors to identify as abuse, particularly if they are accustomed to associating DV with physical violence: *“it can take women years to recognize it because sometimes the abuse can be much more subtle.”* It can also be more difficult to detect and/or prosecute.

*It's easier to know who the bad guy is [in cases of physical abuse. With] this other demographic...the abuse is more subtle and the issues are more complicated. Your house is being bugged in ways you don't understand, you realize that a thumb drive in your office is a digital voice recorder, your husband knows where you are even then you leave your phone at home - there is a GPS on your car... or there's property overseas and he's hiding accounts... You need a forensic accountant to sort this out... [People say] 'He's never raised his voice or called you a name - why are you complaining? It must be your problem...'* (Key Informant)

*I had one woman who was told by her attorney 'Why don't you let me work harder for you and get you a fairer settlement?... She was still living with her physician husband at the time she was going through the divorce...because he had control over all the finances. So she said to the attorney 'You know what he told me over dinner the other night? He said, "Do you know there's over 40 ways to kill a woman and make it look like she died from natural causes?"' That's power and control at a whole new level in the hands of someone who is very educated and sophisticated...I had another woman whose physician husband said, 'Here's how I'm going to kill you. I'm going to inject you with a solution and you'll be dead within seconds and nobody's going to know because I'm going to do it between your toe and your toenail and the coroner will never look there'....So, power and*

*control are the same, no matter what the income level is; those basic dynamics are the same; it can just become more sophisticated when in the hands of an educated abuser. (Key Informant)*

*The more money you have, the more tools you have at your disposal. Anything in the hands of an abuser can become a weapon.... There are many ways you can coerce and control somebody and the more money and power, the more social power you have, the more effective and subtle you can be at doing it. (Key Informant)*

As with DV in other socioeconomic strata, violence takes many forms among the affluent, including physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, sexual, spiritual, financial, technological and legal abuse. One author suggests that emotional abuse may be more prominent among this population (Weitzman 2000), and one key informant felt that a particular type of sexual assault<sup>6</sup> was more common. Other researchers and key informants point to the pervasiveness of financial, technological, and legal abuse among the wealthy.

- Examples of **financial abuse** identified through the literature review, environmental scan and qualitative research include: having sole access to mortgages; restricting access to bank accounts; keeping her on an restrictive allowance; punishing overspending; ruining her credit rating by maxing out her credit cards; hiding joint funds in accounts that she cannot access; sabotaging her career so she has no means to support herself without him; using financial resources to coerce children to side with him upon separation (Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016; Berg 2014).

*My first husband is still a nightmare in terms of getting the kids to be against me – he can do that because he has control of his mother’s money – and he can hold that over them. They [the family] have already cut his brother out of the will, so the threat is real, and they know if they don’t toe the line they’ll be cut off. (Survivor)*

*The more money, the more power. You can’t fight. We are in a worse situation because they have so much money and power – and everything’s under his name. (Survivor)*

*The marriage contract itself assumes that both parties are going to act in good faith toward one another – whatever debts and assets are accumulated over the*

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<sup>6</sup> The informant said that the type of planned, serial sexual assaults that affluent women report seem to be unique to this population: “[Perpetrators] who were serial rapists inside the relationship – you’re more apt to see that in affluent relationships. I haven’t heard it talked about in other SES – that kind of careful planning and serial aspect of it – I haven’t heard it described in lower income groups. I’ve heard it described in affluent relationships many times in different ways. You have the time when you have the money. Time for setting up the process, that serial aspect.” (Key Informant)

*course of the marriage are shared by both parties assuming both are acting in good faith. Now in a work relationship where one doesn't act in good faith, you call that embezzlement... When it happens in a marriage, if one steals the life savings of the other, you call that what? A bad marriage... (Key Informant)*

- Examples of **technological abuse** include: installing spyware on computers and phones, installing hidden cameras in the house, hacking into social media and email accounts, installing GPS devices on vehicles.

*He would know if I tried to access help because he had hacked my computer and phone. And he drove me everywhere. He wouldn't even allow me to go to the doctor alone. (Survivor)*

*Technological abuse is rampant especially here in Silicon Valley. [I worked with] a lady who was married to someone who works on satellites [and] tracking devices – she's from a fancy area in Beverly Hills and now she lives in the Bay area. Her husband said to her, 'Why don't you crawl back into that hole in Beverly Hills that you came out of?' So she's here in the Bay area. She types an address in her GPS in her car – it was overridden with directions back to Beverly Hills. She tries to overwrite it with her own voice command and that gets overridden by her husband's voice saying, "Go back to Beverly Hills". She tells the police that and they go, 'Yeah, sure lady' and send her away like she's crazy. (Key Informant)*

*Safety planning [has to involve] not just physical safety..., but are they being bugged? Is their car being tapped into, their phones, their computers? Are there hidden cameras in their homes? They can end up looking crazy and paranoid [when they report this type of abuse], and I've had ladies being put on psychiatric lock downs or holds. (Key Informant)*

- Examples of **legal abuse** include: repeatedly dragging the survivor to court over frivolous issues to deplete her financial resources; creating a conflict of interest with the most reputable law firms in town so that the survivor cannot get effective representation; manipulating the judicial system through favours or bribes; false allegations of child abuse; dragging out custody hearings.

*I've had other women who have wound up in jail being made to look like they're the perpetrators by very savvy calculating partners who know how to use the law as a weapon. (Key Informant)*

*We are not able to achieve safety and justice [for our affluent clients] in the way that we're able to help other clients because of complexities of legal systems. Pro bono lawyers are often law students or new lawyers. When talking about men who have higher degrees of power and money – they have more legal resources – they're more sophisticated. The moms in my study all had big name attorneys*

*and few of them were successful – many lost custody. There were unsubstantiated claims of child abuse. The first story I heard was the husband had paid off custody evaluators, judges lawyers. She was a stay-at-home mom of six kids and she lost custody despite allegations of DV – because the husband used every legal tool against her. He would also use ‘conflict of interest’ to limit her choice of lawyers [e.g., husband’s foundation made a donation that led to conflict of interest]. They just have greater tools at their disposal. It wasn’t the violence that bothered me in doing my research – I mean that bothered me of course, but what really bothered me was that it felt tremendously hopeless. One mom in my studies is one of leading bankruptcy attorneys in the country. She said, ‘If I can’t figure this out, it’s hopeless.’ (Key Informant)*

*If a person is a victim from a financial perspective as well, it creates a huge imbalance in the legal arena because he can fight the legal battle and use the courts as another tool of abusive conduct. Just find the right lawyer who will copartner to use his financial clout. (Family Lawyer)*

## **5.0 Barriers and Enablers: What factors influence help-seeking and disclosure in affluent communities?**

### **5.1 Barriers**

Key barriers to disclosure and help-seeking include cultural values and norms, fear, and failure to recognize the abuse. Each of these is outlined briefly below.

#### **5.1.1 Cultural Values and Norms**

*They buy into the myth that DV afflicts only the underprivileged. The myth becomes a type of institutionalized oppression for the upscale. If a culture’s tribal rules deny a phenomenon, then it is truly bound to silence. (Weitzman, 2000, p. 8)*

Haselschwerdt and Hardesty (2016; Also Haselschwerdt, 2013) studied DV in affluent communities and described how the degree to which women buy into the culture of affluence influences their decisions to disclose and seek help for DV. Affluent communities tend to exert social pressure to conform to community standards and keep up appearances. It is important to maintain the image of a community of happy families and highly successful individuals with a wealth of opportunities and resources. The authors identified significant differences in disclosure depending on the degree to which the survivor bought into the culture of affluence; they further noted that providers in the study were in a unique position to help mothers shift their thinking from valuing the culture of influence towards empowerment and advocacy, but they failed to do so. (This is explored further in *Strategies*). Below, we outline the differences in disclosure identified in the study.

<b>Table 1: Relationship between disclosure and cultural buy-in</b> <b>(Haselschwerdt &amp; Hardesty, 2016)</b>		
	<b>Strong Buy-In to the Culture of Affluence</b>	<b>Weak Buy-In to the Culture of Affluence</b>
<b>Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tended to be from ‘old money’</li> <li>• Husbands had high status in the community</li> <li>• Wealth and inheritance were very important to the survivor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tended to be from ‘new money’</li> <li>• Married to lower status men (i.e., chronically unemployed or work in blue collar professions)</li> <li>• Wives were the primary breadwinners or had a large inheritance</li> </ul>
<b>Secrecy and Disclosure Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worked hard to keep DV a secret</li> <li>• Believed they were alone in their experiences and that DV only happens in other communities</li> <li>• Only disclosed in the late stages of marriage, or when initiating divorce</li> <li>• Needed to make a shift from maintaining the image of a happy family toward empowerment – and this could only happen by engaging in a process of deciding what mattered most to them</li> <li>• Disclosure often came at the expense of their reputation in the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opted to disclose much earlier in the marriage</li> <li>• Described disclosure and receiving affirmation as empowering and liberating</li> <li>• Were the only women to disclose to/seek help from DV shelters and organizations</li> </ul>

Weitzman (2000) notes that the silence that often typifies DV in affluent communities “dooms the woman’s course of action in 5 ways:

- *It keeps her isolated and prevents her from seeking validation from others*
- *It limits her motivation to seek help*
- *It keeps her from receiving feedback from others confirming her worth and ability to survive outside the marriage*

- *It keeps her from utilizing existing avenues for help which are geared toward lower-income women, further limiting her options for getting relief*
- *It confirms the myth that abuse does not occur among the upscale, because the violence is rarely discussed or reported.*

*Consequently, the upscale woman's silence, which is her misguided attempt to adapt and cope with her circumstances, reinforces her staying in her predicament.” (p. 35)*

### 5.1.2 Fear

While fear is a common element of disclosure at all socioeconomic strata, the source and nature of some of the anxieties that affluent women experience are different. Based on the literature, environmental scan and qualitative research, disclosure and help-seeking may be impacted by fear of one or more of the following:

- **Fear of change in socioeconomic status:** Affluent women often fear reduced wealth and social status (Weitzman, 2013). Several informants noted that they have ‘farther to fall,’ with one pointing out that they may be less resilient than lower income women who have learned to meet the challenges of poverty and multiple moves. The desire to maintain their current lifestyle and/or social standing can keep affluent women in violent relationships and inhibit the impulse to disclose.

*Once they step out of that situation their resources drop dramatically. SES changes drastically – so when they choose to leave, they choose a whole new lifestyle. They give up their social circles generally - pretty much leaving one social circle and creating a new one. Most don't come out with money. (Key Informant)*

*Many of my ladies, they have dropped down several income levels or social levels as a result of their partner's financial and legal abuse and so they end up not living nothing close to their original lifestyle. (Key Informant)*

*The stakes are much higher for middle or upper income women to seek help and leave. Because if I'm poor now and I leave, I'm still going to be poor. But people plunge into poverty after divorce. You know the finances be controlled by abuser and that will be a major weapon he wields in addition to the kids. (Key informant)*

One of the lawyers we spoke with said that, in his experience, fear of losing the home often keeps women in the relationship:

*“Safe physical space is pretty critical – and for them, that's their home. The more likely it is that a woman is able to maintain her home, the more likely she is to feel safe in leaving the relationship. If they can't stay in the home or no financial capacity to ensure that they have a home, they are less likely to leave a relationship – especially for women who are used to having their own space.”*

This lawyer also noted that, in Alberta, judges have very little leeway when it comes to common law relationships. Therefore, a woman who is not legally married stands to lose

everything – and this can be a significant barrier to exiting the relationship. (This is discussed further in *Capacity Building and Advocacy*, below)

*For people who are married, there are specific legal remedies available to them through the Marriage Act that can help balance things – judges have power – they can grant exclusive access to the house for example or access to the joint bank account. But when you're not married, you don't have access to the same rights. There's no legislation. Where people are common law, there are more restrictions on what judges can do. A woman leaving a relationship where there's no marriage, there's no ability to remain in the home. If it's not in their name, the perpetrator controls assets, and creates an even higher hurdle [to leaving].*

(Lawyer)

- **Risk to Professional Status:** Disclosure can also threaten a survivor's professional status, especially if she works in a health/mental health profession or shares a business with the perpetrator. Berg (2014) points out that *"this population may be accustomed to being perceived as successful and free of problems, leading to worry about how domestic violence will threaten their public image along with their professional networks and careers."* (p. 149). They may also be afraid that they will do damage to their partner's career.

*I was working as a psychologist. You can't tell anyone because who's going to go to a psychologist who's in an abusive relationship? (Survivor)*

*We had a business together. He was very talented [...and] attracted big contracts and we made a lot of money. [...] Part of my problem [in leaving the relationship] is how would I make a living? Am I supposed to compete with him for the same clients? How will I earn a living when we had a business together? I worked hard as well in that relationship – I had earned that money. I was angry that I might have to give that all up– give it all up and have nothing. He isn't giving anything up. (Survivor)*

*I couldn't tell anyone. We wouldn't have had any business! We looked like the couple who had it all together. I didn't want to say anything to anyone. (Survivor)*

- **Fear of Not Being Believed:** As noted elsewhere in this report, believability is a greater issue in affluent communities for several reasons: 1) The abuser often has high levels of credibility within the community due to his wealth, status, community involvement and education levels; 2) The abuser will sometimes use this status to actively discredit the survivor (e.g., claiming she has mental health issues); 3) DV is more commonly associated with lower income populations. As one survivor pointed out, *"even in movies, ...it's usually a different demographic"* that is associated with DV. Notably, two of the three survivors in our focus group were not believed upon disclosure.

*If she discloses, excuses are often made for the abuser, or the abuse is written off, even by professionals, as communication issues or a 'tough period' (Weitzman, 2013).*

*Affluent women are often not believed when they do disclose. The abuser is often prominent and holds power and money, and people are more apt to pay attention to that. (Key informant).*

- **Fear of rejection:** Many affluent survivors fear ostracism and rejection, and unfortunately this fear is often justified. One of the survivors in our focus group reported that she had belonged to an elite organization comprised of wealthy individuals. When she disclosed, she was effectively shut out of the group.

*They're supposed to have your back. It's supposed to be like 'Rich people have problems too' – that's why you had that group. But after I left my husband – the next meeting [I was basically asked to leave]... They didn't believe me. Rather than being helpful or pointing me in the right direction, they said they were going to focus on marriage the following year and that wouldn't apply to me anyway. (Survivor)*

*Judgment and blame is so fierce. And they are used to feeling privileged and not ashamed. So it contributes to silencing and immobilizing them. It's embarrassing to be victim of DV for anyone, but when your husband is well known or you are well known in small community, it's really hard. (Key informant)*

*Members of privileged populations best maintain their unearned advantage by helping to preserve the status of their group. For dominant culture women this means maintaining an image of superiority – one in which domestic violence is non-existent. They often face tremendous pressure to keep their abuse hidden and to preserve a false self at the cost of psychological growth.... Women who violate this norm by exposing their experience of abuse risk being ostracized by their communities. Women who defy the norms of the culture and threaten its status...are systemically penalized with rejection from members of the dominant culture. Although battered dominant culture women have access to resources beyond their marginalized counterparts, these privileges operate as additional incentives to keep domestic violence hidden in the interest of the status quo. (Berg, 2014, p. 149)*

- **Fear that they are not capable of leaving the relationship:** Weitzman (2000) found that the women she studied on average had more education than their spouses but they rarely drew upon their education, work success or personal achievements in finding solutions to their abusive relationship.

*Some realize that over time, their self-confidence has been eroded. While they may have previously run their own company, they can now barely do anything without feeling they've done something wrong. (Key informant)*

### **5.1.3 Failure to recognize or acknowledge abuse**

Women at all socioeconomic levels can fail to acknowledge abuse – particularly when it does not take the form of physical violence. However, this may be even more common among affluent women for reasons that have already been presented (e.g., an overriding sense that DV doesn't happen in affluent communities; pressure to conform to the ideal family; cognitive dissonance created when professionally successful women experience violence, etc.). Weitzman (2000, 2013) points out that affluent women often did not witness or experience abuse in their family of origin, and therefore might not recognize abuse when it happens to them.

*I never saw myself in an abusive relationship till after, until it turned physical. I never really saw it [because of the association of DV with physical violence]. Also, as a strong woman I didn't want to admit to myself that I was being weak. [Interviewer: Weak in what sense?] The marriage not being successful – I mean, I don't really practice Catholicism, but [one of its tenets is] you marry and you're married for life. Also, I didn't want to admit to myself that I was being controlled, that I was weak by not leaving. I thought I was being strong by not leaving and actually the opposite was true. (Survivor)*

*They're less likely to self-identify as abused. That's just part of the norm. I'm not sure what part of that is just hiding it from others and what part is a genuine lack of recognition. (Lawyer)*

*Helping them understand that just because they're not being beaten doesn't mean they're not being abused. For many women, it can take 10, 20, 30, 40 years to wake up to that notion. (Key informant)*

## **5.2 Enablers**

Key informants noted that children often provide the necessary motivation to disclose or seek help. When women begin to see the impact that the violence is having on their children, they are more likely to take action. Initially, it might involve seeking therapeutic help for their child(ren), with one informant saying this is sometimes how DV is first identified by someone outside the home.

*A very common story is for women to take it until they see what's being done to the children. That becomes a wake-up call. Sometimes it's when they see how the children start treating them. And if they've got two children, all of a sudden there are three tyrants in the house....or one is starting to act out in other ways – trouble at school or self medicating with drugs or alcohol, and unfortunately the kids become the identified patients ... because they're struggling in school or having problems socially, with drugs and alcohol and those problems get treated as if they are problems in and of themselves but they are often symptoms of that underlying cause. (Key informant)*

*While every case is unique, a common trajectory is that victims tolerate the abuse until they see how it is affecting the children; or sometimes when they realize their children have been turned against them. (Key informant)*

## **6.0 Entry Points, Services, Strategies and Advocacy: How can we more effectively support affluent survivors?**

This section of the report explores messaging and outreach opportunities, service and support requirements, strategies for working with affluent populations, and capacity building and advocacy needs related to this work.

### **6.1 Messaging and Outreach**

Findings from all three methodologies suggest that messaging needs to be specific to this population as they do not see themselves in the general DV messaging<sup>7</sup> that exists. Given the pervasive myth that DV doesn't happen in affluent communities, messaging should specifically highlight that women of means can be victims of violence, and that it can be even harder for a person who is well-educated or well-resourced to acknowledge abuse and/or ask for help. Messaging around being believed might also be important for this demographic.

*I don't think they gravitate to general announcements. I said that I was 'looking for women on the North Shore' which to them is code for 'affluent.' You need to acknowledge their status.... With recruitment approaches, the key is to acknowledge their status. Their social status is really salient. It might not feel comfortable – but if you're trying to recruit, I think we have to acknowledge that. (Key Informant)*

*You need a point of contact where you know someone's going to believe you. (Survivor)*

Wording for this audience may need to be more discrete. One informant suggested avoiding “loaded words like victim or violence.” Another suggested that it may be less intrusive to speak of “unhealthy relationships and how to deal with them or ‘do you know someone who might be experiencing this?’”

One of the challenges associated with reaching out to affluent survivors is that they are unlikely to access services or involve the police – both of which are key referral sources for DV programs. What then are the pathways for affluent women? Informants and survivors suggested targeting venues where affluent women are most likely to congregate or services that they are most likely to access, including:

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<sup>7</sup> Note: By general messaging, we simply mean that they don't see themselves as the audience of most communications. However, key informants pointed out that many of the same types of messages are important for affluent and lower income women – e.g., domestic violence takes many forms, you are not alone, etc.

- Spas and salons
- Country clubs
- Golf clubs
- Upscale gyms
- Places of worship
- Jewish community centres
- Upscale associations like the Junior League
- Physicians' offices (especially general practice physicians, obstetricians and gynecologists, plastic surgeons or cosmetic surgery facilities)
- Upscale department stores
- Private schools attended by children of wealthy families
- Executive coaching services
- Organizations that appeal to high level professionals (e.g., Young Presidents' Organization)
- Lawyers' offices
- Therapists' offices

Strategies for working within these entry points include: placing posters in bathroom stalls; doing presentations; displaying business cards that include program information<sup>8</sup>; and hosting breakfast briefings or luncheons.

*Any university bathroom you go into or bar you see "If you're in need of help..." in different languages. Put those up at the Calgary Golf and Country Club – in the Women's bathroom. Or the Glencoe Club. (Survivor)*

*Private clinics. Most people there are affluent. You could be educating doctors in affluent communities. (Survivor)*

Relationship and capacity building within these entry points is also important. Some of the organizations we spoke with provided education and sensitivity training to build the capacity of personnel within these entry points (e.g., therapists, lawyers teachers, guidance counsellors, etc.) to recognize the signs of abuse and make effective referrals. (This is discussed further in Capacity Building, below).

Social and public media (e.g., newspapers, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, TV, etc.) was also identified as an important medium for communicating to women of affluence. One of the organizations we interviewed, the *Domestic Violence Action Center* in Honolulu, successfully contracted a communications firm to develop a public awareness campaign for them pro bono.

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<sup>8</sup> The Women of Means program in Naples, Florida developed a discrete business card that included the program name, contact information and a brief description of the program. Women can slip the card into their purse quite easily.

The campaign, called *Hiding in Plain Sight*<sup>9</sup>, included a television commercial featuring people of wealth speaking about their experiences, as well as a television documentary produced in concert with the local TV station. The documentary, which is narrated by a former news anchor who is a survivor of upscale violence, includes a number of prominent community figures and local heroes who have been impacted by domestic violence. This strategy of identifying people of affluence and renown who are willing to tell their story was highly recommended by key informants, who said it is both riveting and empowering for others in a similar situation, and helps to break down the misconception that DV only happens to poor people. Other ways in which social and public media has been used include online YouTube interviews (e.g., [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7C\\_HERedsE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7C_HERedsE)) and articles/editorials in local newspapers.

## 6.2 Services

### 6.2.1 Barriers to Accessing Services

Three key barriers to access emerged in our research. The first centres on social status. Women in our focus group said that they would never consider accessing some social services because of their association with lower socioeconomic strata: *“I would rather have starved than to go to the Food Bank.”* This is supported by the literature. Kaukinen, et al. (2013) for example, found that DV survivors with higher income levels are less likely to contact health, social services and legal support systems, and that higher income women may confront greater professional sanctions for disclosing DV than lower income women. Liang, et al. (2005) similarly found that sociocultural variables influenced help-seeking behaviors and sources of support, noting that wealthy women rarely choose formal supports.<sup>10</sup>

The second barrier is related to eligibility criteria. One of the paradoxes associated with affluent survivors is that they can be wealthy ‘on paper’ and have virtually no access to resources. Some of the survivors we consulted said that they had trouble accessing free services and supports, even though they did not have access to financial resources at that time. In one case, a survivor said that she didn’t even try to access services because of the assumptions she thought providers were likely to make.

*I went to [two Calgary-based service providers] but you’re still graded according to what you make – and I didn’t have access to the money. There was no free help. (Key Informant)*

The third barrier is related to the assumptions that many service providers make about affluent survivors – and the implications this has for their capacity to respond with empathy and understanding. When asked about accessing services, the women in our focus group shared that they were sometimes afraid of being judged, denied service or dismissed as unbelievable. One

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<sup>9</sup> *Hiding in Plain Sight* can be viewed online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e3p5bzwtoM>

<sup>10</sup> See also: Fugate, et al. 2015 regarding barriers to DV help-seeking and Gover, et al. 2016, regarding victimization and help seeking among survivors of intimate partner violence.

participant stated that the perception of the invulnerability is precisely what makes affluent women vulnerable:

*People think 'What kinds of problems can she have?' The general thought is that if you have money, you don't have problems – you're just making stuff up. I do think that, because people are human, that kind of education needs to go into psychology and social work training – because some of the most vulnerable people are people who you don't think should have a problem and that's why they're vulnerable. (Survivor)*

*I wouldn't have gone to a shelter. They wouldn't have believed me. They would have said 'What is your problem? You must have your own house.'* (Key Informant)

*Perceived as having access to wealth, she engenders little empathy from others. She becomes depressed, fatigued and anxious and further self-isolates (Weitzman, 2013, p. 4).*

Other survivors and key informants alluded to potential discrimination and lack of empathy on the part of service providers in the DV sector – a concern that is supported in the literature (Weitzman, 2000; Berg 2014).

*Everyone's worried about discriminating against people that are immigrants or minorities, but it works the other way too. (Survivor)*

*[Working with affluent women is] not a post for everyone. Not every advocate can handle hearing a woman talk about losing \$100,000 a month when they don't even make that in a year – and not judged her for that. That's just what their circumstance is or was. They're lamenting, and rightly so because they were married... [and] there is an expectation that you're to be taken care of when there's a break up. And if you're abused, that's even worse. And so, yes – it's fitting to a particular type of advocate or person who is able to understand where they are and to still treat them delicately while understanding it may come across to some that they appear to be entitled... (Key Informant)*

*We have advocates who think [affluent clients who won't go to the shelter] just need to get over themselves... (Key Informant)*

*The fact is, upscale abused wives are treated differently from other women. Their complaints may be taken lightly – after all, these women do have roofs over their heads and usually pretty nice ones at that. It is not uncommon for a policeman encountering an expensively dressed woman in her well-appointed home to assume that she has the resources to take care of herself – even though her husband may control all of the credit cards and bank accounts and may have brainwashed her into believing that she and their children would not survive in the world without him. (Weitzman, 2000, p. 9)*

Cultural competency has become a requirement for social services – but as Berg (2014) points out, those approaches have focused on *marginalized* cultures. We don't tend to think about the dynamics of dominant or privileged cultures. Furthermore, social workers are often oriented to

equate vulnerability with lower income populations and to consider privilege as a protective factor. While privilege does indeed confer many benefits, the pressures, expectations, norms and taboos associated with a culture of affluence also introduce risk factors that are rarely considered.<sup>11</sup> Service providers may need to be supported to *“identify cultural factors relevant to the treatment of clients from ‘dominant cultures’ and to critique risk factors tied to systemic privilege. When privilege is presumed to function as a protective factor, social workers overlook the impact of complex environmental systems on the lives of their clients.”* (Berg, 2014, p. 150)

*We have different domestic violence agencies that focus on different populations – one on Hispanic, south Asian, Asian community, Jewish – mine focuses on the culture of affluence which has its own taboos, pressures, and expectations. So it’s a question of helping people understand that the culture of affluence is its own culture... (Key Informant)*

*Social workers can become more effective in their practice by accounting for cultural factors in the lives of all clients, including dominant culture women. Clinicians can implement these theories by identifying how the client is impacted by systems of privilege and oppression as part of a biopsychosocial-spiritual assessment. Critical considerations about the role of culture are required to provide comprehensive treatment in cases where privilege does not consistently operate as a protective factor. In work with battered dominant culture women, for instance, it is mistaken to either wholly disregard privilege or to only see social status in terms of advantage. In order to provide truly culturally competent treatment, privilege that keeps domestic violence hidden from public view must be understood as a system that serves to both protect the elevated status of men who batter and maintain their systemic privilege due to race, class and sexual orientation. (Berg, 2104, p. 150)*

## **6.2.2 Service and Support Requirements**

The organizations included in our environmental scan generally provided three categories of services and supports to meet the needs of this population. (For a full list of programs, services and supports identified in the environmental scan, please see the organizational profiles in Appendix D). These included:

### **1. Direct supports for affluent survivors, including:**

- Dedicated phone line
- Education, self-empowerment focused approaches
- Individual counseling
- Support groups
- Safety planning

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<sup>11</sup> Increasingly, this is becoming recognized in the adolescent mental health field, where rates of anxiety, depression, eating disorders and addiction are higher among affluent adolescents than their middle class peers. See, for example: Luthar & Latendresse (2005). “Children of the Affluent: Challenges to Well-Being.” *Curr Dir Psychol Sci*, 14(1): 49-53. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1948879/>

- Provision of instrumental supports (e.g., housing and employment supports, etc.)
- Legal supports (e.g., court accompaniment, legal counsel, etc.)
- Referrals (e.g., forensic accountants, private investigators, etc.)
- Healing arts, meditation, yoga, etc.

## **2. Community education and outreach**

- Focused on addressing the culture of silence around DV in affluent communities and fostering dialogue
- Raising awareness of upscale violence as a public health issue

## **3. Education, training and capacity building**

- Training service providers, therapists and legal professionals around the dynamics of DV in affluent communities<sup>12</sup>

As is evident from the listing above, many of the services and supports offered by these organizations are similar to those offered to other populations. For the most part, the customization of services undertaken by the key informants we spoke with centred less around the type of service/support offered, and more around the focus and/or approach.

Four themes emerged around ways that services and supports should be customized for affluent survivors. These include: 1) Account for the perpetrator's level of sophistication and resourcing, 2) Cultivate cultural competency specific to the culture of affluence, 3) Protect the privacy of affluent survivors, 4) Consider the pros and cons of offering homogeneous group supports. Each of these is discussed briefly below.<sup>13</sup>

### **1. Account for the perpetrator's level of sophistication and resourcing**

As discussed earlier in this report, violence within an affluent relationship can manifest in ways that are terribly sophisticated because of the levels of education, power and financial resources available to the perpetrator. This has implications for the types of services and supports that are offered. Safety planning, for example, may need to take unique circumstances into account (e.g., safety plans for private jets or yachts) and consider the possibilities associated with sophisticated surveillance systems:

*What we see for example are women who may tell us that 'he can have...a tracking device placed in my car, he has access to yachts and private planes,' and so we have to do safety*

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<sup>12</sup> For an outline of the training offered by one of the organizations we interviewed, please see: [http://www.sccpa.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=87&club\\_id=956131&item\\_id=329610](http://www.sccpa.org/content.aspx?page_id=87&club_id=956131&item_id=329610)

<sup>13</sup> Note: A couple of the informants did not draw significant distinctions between the services offered to lower income women and those offered to affluent survivors. In general, however, they were working with upper middle class women. One noted that she was not sure her approach would be effective were she working with the 'super-rich.' Therefore, different levels of affluence may need to be considered when designing services and supports.

*planning for those kinds of environments because... men have said, you know, I can drop you off in the Gulf of Mexico and nobody would be the wiser. Because of their access to resources. So you'll find that many of the women have experience that men have already filed for divorce so they are caught off guard, they are dealing with the abuse and then the man files for divorce and so they have the issue of forensic accountants they may have need of, they may need family law attorneys, appellate attorneys, therapists, and the safety plan for luxury toys. (Key Informant)*

The legal supports offered to these women also need to be more sophisticated as their abusers have the connections and resources to manipulate the justice system and drag out divorce and custody proceedings (see *Examples of Legal Abuse* earlier in this report). One program in Naples Florida hired an advocate with a legal background so that she could help to prepare affluent women for the types of challenges that they are likely to meet. Others spoke of connecting clients to resources such as appellate lawyers, forensic accountants, and financial planners/wealth managers.

*[Interviewer: What is the difference between the supports you provide to wealthy women and supports for others?] All of the legal supports for sure; the resources that we provide them may be a little bit more tailored toward them. For example, we are trying to ensure we keep a bank of forensic accountants. Other women may not need that type of resource; private investigators, appellate attorneys in case there's an appeal that has to be done - not all lawyers can do that. Also financial planners – many of them who get settlements would then need to understand what to do with that money. They may have never had to have managed money...maybe they just had access to a card and shopped to their heart's content, now they have to manage money and take care of themselves – so wealth managers; we have partnerships with them. (Key Informant)*

Finally, because of the level of power and sophistication, one informant said that she routinely instructs survivors to:

- 'Stay ahead of the game' and disclose to those with power before he gets to them
- Align herself with powerful people who have her best interest at heart
- Be prepared for a tough battle
- Recognize that life may not be easy if she leaves
- Carefully plan a strategic exit long before disclosing her intentions to her abuser

## **2. Cultivate cultural competency**

Given some of the issues related to cultural competency outlined in the section above, services and supports should focus on ensuring that their environments are welcoming and safe for affluent women. This may require a review of organizational hiring and training protocols to ensure that staff have a greater understanding of the key dynamics of the culture of affluence and the potential risks involved for this population (e.g., hiring people who have experience with this population, facilitating empathy training and cultural competency training). Some informants

felt that, in the words of one interviewee, *“affluent women have really very specialized needs and so to have someone dedicated to them is really necessary.”* (Capacity building around cultural competency is discussed further below).

### **3. Protect privacy**

While confidentiality is a concern for women from every socioeconomic strata, it is particularly salient for women who are embedded within a culture with strict norms and expectations related to privacy. Privacy concerns can be exacerbated by the fact that some affluent survivors are well known within the broader community – and they will likely want to protect themselves from media exposure and/or community gossip. The Women of Means program in Naples Florida offered an example of one way in which they have accommodated the need for privacy: each day, they post the names of expected visitors to the facility on a white board, giving survivors a ‘heads up’ that someone they know may be visiting. Their clients can then make a plan to avoid being seen.

*In the lobby area, there is a white board where we put names of people who might be visiting the shelter in the event that some of the ladies might know someone. That’s for every survivor, not just for women of means, but for them we recognize we’re doing tours, or persons from our guild are visiting, and say the women don’t want to run into them, at least they’ll know that that name is there and they can decide if they want to wait in their car, or go into the restroom...we make accommodations to protect that group. (Key Informant)*

One informant pointed out that confidentiality among this group is not simply related to issues around recognition by others in the community. Confidentiality is also a matter of life or death in cases where perpetrators have access to highly sophisticated tools of abuse: *“Confidentiality can be the difference between life and death in this population – any population, really, but particularly for women whose abusers have access to resources.”*

Finally, a few interviewees pointed out that the need for privacy may limit the types of services that affluent women will access, saying that group-based support might be less appealing than individualized supports for some women within this population.

*When I’ve referred clients to places like Sagesse, they don’t usually continue with them. There’s a small portion of clients that stay with Sagesse and it meets their needs, but they’re more likely to go to a private counsellor versus peer support. Peer support can be problematic because it involves “too big a circle” – they want to keep the circle of people who know small - so they don’t stay. More one-on-one services would be great. (Lawyer)*

*“For older women living in an abusive situation, they’re not going anywhere; they’re going to stay and take it. They would be amenable to individual counseling – that would be the best route for them. I don’t see them going to a group and admitting in a group that they are being abused because they have to keep up that thought of the family and that everything is fine.” (Key Informant)*

However, the survivors we spoke with said that they thought other women in their situation would consider attending group sessions if they could be with people like themselves. When asked if she thought peer support would work with this population, one survivor replied: “Yes I would think so. I think that’s really how they operate – on a social basis. I’m not sure. That’s part of the problem – they don’t think there’s anyone else in their situation who has that problem.” Others said they would have liked to have been able to meet with others of a similar demographic who were also experiencing DV.

*I wanted to talk to someone like me with the same background. It wasn’t enough to have the therapist tell me that these things happen in all communities – I wanted to talk to someone else like me who had experienced it. Because the idea is it doesn’t happen in Jewish families, it doesn’t happen to educated people. (Survivor)*

*If I had known there was a [peer support] group for people like me I would have been interested in going. (Survivor)*

*It would be great to be with like-minded people, because we don’t have anyone to talk with about it. (Survivor)*

#### **4. Consider the pros and cons of homogeneity**

We asked key informants whether services and peer support groups should be targeted to affluent women specifically, or whether mixed groups (i.e., women from all socioeconomic strata) might work. Unfortunately, there was no consensus on this question. Some thought that outreach to a more affluent population would need to be specialized, but that they could be integrated into existing peer support groups and other types of programming. Others thought that some level of homogeneity was important, particularly with those survivors who are at the upper levels of wealth.

*I think it would depend – I don’t have any that are really highest level [of affluence] – more middle class. That’s why I don’t think I’ve had issues for a while. There have been some who were more affluent and were more haughty – they may not have a lot of income but more social status. (Key Informant)*

*The shame is so great....I think it would be difficult to get them to come because they don’t know who will be there. You have to assure them that the people who will be there will be just like them. It would have to be marketed that way. (Key Informant)*

*... the perspectives might be so different. If an affluent woman says ‘I have to leave my house’ and is distressed, woman of lesser means might not understand her fear. A woman who has only known two places of comfort – her parents’ and her husband’s [houses] – and is making a move to complete independence for the first time ever, first time she’s ever had to look after herself – it’s terrifying. I’m not sure a woman of lesser means who has made numerous moves and has taken care of herself financially would understand that. (Lawyer)*

The limited sample of survivors that we spoke with had some concerns about being judged or misunderstood in mixed groups. One said that she was less concerned about being with others who are affluent, but she did think that similarities in terms of education levels were important.

*It's hard unless you're talking to someone on the same socio-economic level. For example, [names an elite group] – that's why we have it – because people think if you have money or social standing that you don't have problems....People look at how you're dressed, how you live, the car you drive. You see it on reality TV in negative ways – these people have money and they have problems and it's a joke. Like the Real Housewives shows – they have real problems and they're a joke. People don't take you seriously. (Survivor)*

*It could work with mixed groups provided they are educated in such a way that they wouldn't have preconceived notions. (Survivor)*

*I would have preferred [peer support groups comprised of women] with at least the same level of education. I went up and down in terms of money. But I have a master's degree and would have wanted someone to talk with who would have understood what I was saying. (Survivor)*

However, one survivor felt that mixed groups might be helpful to women of all socioeconomic strata *“to realize it's not any one demographic that experiences this.”*

Chronister (2006) worked with DV survivors from different socioeconomic levels (as well as different racial identities). She faced a number of issues when she combined upper and lower SES survivors in a 10-month career program. Many of the upper class, white women in her program reported that they didn't feel that they 'belonged' for a number of reasons: 1) They had never been homeless or experienced poverty as others in the group had; 2) They felt that their experience of DV was 'not as bad'; 3) Given their resource and education level, they wanted to focus on different issues (i.e., advanced career development). Group leaders worked with these women to understand the sources of their discomfort and discuss the benefits of shared and distinct experiences, but they had limited success. *“Women who reported more economic resources and shared their concerns individually with research team members did not share their concerns in a group. Instead, women continued to share their discomfort with research team members, ask for separate career counseling services, and two women dropped out because they felt so uncomfortable in the groups”* (p. 178). (Notably, women of lower SES also felt uncomfortable with the mixed groups, with some reporting that they felt judged by the white, affluent women in the program. Some said didn't feel like participating in the conversations as a result). The author concluded by saying that she doesn't believe there is a “right” way to approach this issue; she sees both benefits and drawbacks to mixing affluent and less affluent women in peer support groups (outlined in Table 2 below).

Pros and Cons of mixing affluent and less affluent women in DV support groups (Chronister, 2006)		
	Mixed SES Groups	Homogenous SES Groups
<b>Pros</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diversity of women’s experiences increases the potential for women to hear different perspectives and learn a broad range of skills from other group members</li> <li>• Women from diverse cultural backgrounds who have a comprehensive understanding of their sociocultural contexts and experiences may broaden social support networks and community connections for group members</li> <li>• Maintaining groups that are more diverse is a reality for many social service agencies due to lack of human and financial resources to offer separate cultural groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups that are formed on the basis of a shared identity may greatly enhance connection and group identification in ways that a more diverse group cannot</li> <li>• A more homogeneous group may enhance group identification, connectedness and support</li> <li>• With a shared group identity, women also may be able to address more challenging and intimate issues in a shorter amount of time because they understand one another’s experiences</li> <li>• It may not be necessary or helpful to facilitate women’s critical consciousness of multiple power dynamics in a brief (10 month) intervention as critical consciousness development occurs over time and is developmental</li> </ul>
<b>Cons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discomfort – Feelings of alienation, being judged, not belonging</li> <li>• May inhibit the ability to share freely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No opportunity to learn from diverse experiences or develop solidarity with women from other SES</li> <li>• Limited opportunity to develop critical consciousness or analyze broader power dynamics</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Strategies for Working with Affluent Survivors

For the most part, the strategies identified by key informants and researchers for working with affluent women parallel the types of strategies that service providers would use for women from other socioeconomic strata (e.g., validating her experience, being nonjudgmental, helping them to understand the dynamics of power and control, etc.). Two strategies that are unique for this population include: 1) helping women to navigate an identification with the culture of influence; and 2) helping women work through issues associated with the potential drop in socioeconomic status.

#### 6.4.1 Help women navigate their identification with the culture of affluence

As discussed earlier in this report, one study found significant differences in disclosure and help-seeking among women who bought into the culture of affluence and those who opted out. The study showed that a key strategy for supporting women of affluence might be helping them to shift from valuing the culture of affluence toward valuing empowerment. Providers might, for example, offer examples of how other women have disentangled themselves from that culture and the benefits they experienced in doing so. Women in the study who had strongly identified with the culture of affluence said that they were able to let go of the need to keep up appearances by going through a process of deciding what mattered most to them. When they did this, the goal of de-stigmatizing DV for their children became more important. The experience was liberating for these women, although it often came at the expense of their reputation in the community. Eventually, however, they placed less value on how others perceived them. (Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016).

#### 6.4.2 Help women work through issues associated with the potential drop in socioeconomic status

For many survivors, leaving the marriage will mean a significant change in social and financial status. They may require supports to help navigate this, including help to work through identity issues that may accompany this shift. Key informants said it is important to provide a realistic picture of the road ahead so that women can be better prepared for what may come.

*Let them know that life wasn't going to be as easy if they left, despite the abuse. If they were living in an affluent home, and they were leaving that home, then they probably would end up being the ones that didn't necessarily have any more advantages because the men would say 'You want to leave, you go with nothing'. Some of the women did. They left and they had to start from scratch. It's a longer way to fall than someone from the middle or lower class. (Key Informant)*

*All the regular rules of a relationship go out the window when you're dealing with an [affluent] abuser. He will try to make the woman look like the bad guy. Anything she tells him will be used against her. He will know the things most important to her and he'll try and take them away...He will try and poison the waters, socially, professionally, in the court system to make everybody think she's the bad guy... It's important to give her a heads up in advance of what lies ahead - he's not going to have an epiphany and settle*

*peacefully. There's going to be a war and he's going to be out to destroy her. Not always, but often.* (Key Informant)

## **6.4 Capacity Building and Advocacy**

The marginalization of upscale violence in academic, policy, and practice arenas poses a significant barrier to addressing this issue. The key informants we spoke with echoed calls from the literature to raise public awareness about DV among affluent women, increase research in this area, and build the capacity of service providers, clinicians, police and the legal community to better serve this population (Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016; Weitzman, 2000). Below are some of the key advocacy and capacity building suggestions that emerged in our environmental scan and qualitative research.

### **6.4.1 Public Awareness**

Given the marginalization and invisibility of upscale violence, key informants spoke passionately about the crucial importance of increasing visibility of the issue among the general public. Many do extensive community awareness-raising and outreach in their roles. (See *Messaging and Outreach* above for examples of effective ways of using YouTube and television to raise public awareness). Some said upscale violence should be made a public health issue.

*I want to start a conversation about [upscale violence] in the community so people can go home and have conversations about it – in their family, with friends, in the community, colleagues – overcoming the shame and secrecy... We need to help people realize it's a public health issue.* (Key informant)

*Somewhere between 1 of 3 and 1 of 5 women, globally, will experience DV or sexual assault in their lifetime. Why is it that the incidence of breast cancer is half of that and yet, look at all of the attention it gets?* (Key informant)

### **6.4.2 Policy & Advocacy Work**

One of the lawyers we spoke with said that the Alberta Law Reform Commission is working to propose legislation to address inequities around property rights in common law relationships. Given that lack of property rights can be a key reason for staying in an abusive relationship, he suggested that the DV sector help advocate for this change.

*Many other provinces have legislation to give greater property rights to common law relationships to make it easier for judges to be able to balance things out, give them some predictability. The Alberta Law Reform Commission is working to propose legislation. In terms of what Sagesse and partners can do, the more noise that is created around that, the better – it will help them to complete the work more quickly.* (Family Lawyer)

### **6.4.3 Research & Evaluation**

Despite recognition that DV happens across all populations, regardless of education, income, race, ethnicity or other social locations, there is minimal research about DV among women from upper-middle and upper classes (Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2016; Weitzman, 2000). The key

informants in our study echoed the voices of the few researchers who study DV among this demographic to call for increased research in this area.

#### **6.4.4 Capacity Building**

Given the lack of cultural competence related to dominant/affluent cultures, it is not surprising that capacity building emerged as a very strong theme in the literature review, environmental scan and qualitative research. Key points included the following:

- Train DV service providers to understand norms, dynamics and risk factors associated with the culture of influence, and help them to identify ways to make their environments more welcoming for affluent survivors. Social workers may also need some empathy training related to this population as they are more likely to associate vulnerability with lower socioeconomic status.
- Address some of misconceptions that service providers might have about affluent survivors (e.g., that all of them have access to financial resources).
- Train a range of professionals to recognize signs of DV among affluent populations, including health professionals, clinicians, police, lawyers, and judges. (Clients who are experiencing DV often present with anxiety or depression and/or their children present with mental health/addictions issues – see Weitzman, 2000).
- Train therapists about ways in which their approach might need to be modified when working with affluent women who are experiencing DV, explaining that techniques that work for people with relatively healthy relationships can backfire in situations with an affluent abuser. (e.g., One informant pointed out that couple’s therapy is highly dangerous in a situation that involves a powerful, narcissistic abuser).
- Partner with post-secondary educational settings to integrate content related to upscale violence in the medical, nursing, social work and law faculties.
- Work with the Canadian Bar Association and Legal Education Society of Alberta to develop training around this issue for the legal community, including training on: how to recognize signs of DV; the impact of DV on mental processing; and how to connect survivors to community resources.

*The most immediate point of contact where they’re able to speak freely and confidentially is usually their lawyer. There’s no training for lawyers on the psychological impact of DV – how clients and mental processing may be different as a result of DV, how to identify those clients who may be victims. There’s no tools or training. [Interviewer: Would lawyers actually sign up for that kind of training?] Yes. The amount of ongoing training that family lawyers have to do – people have no clue! I do 30-40 hours of continuing education every year. And I’ve been doing family law for 25 years! Some provinces have a minimum number of hours imposed on every lawyer. There’s no minimum requirements in Alberta, but the Law Society does require us to implement some kind of continuing education plan*

*– and then we have to report to the Law Society on that plan. [Interviewer: What do you think should be covered in training for lawyers?] There are so many different areas that could be covered – and it could range from an hour to a full day – either would find an audience. The best way to figure out what should be done is to speak with different legal organisations that provide legal education – the Canadian Bar Association and Legal Education Society of Alberta. The latter has professional educators on staff who would be able to assist in the development of appropriate training. You’re really starting from scratch, so anything you develop would be helpful at this point....Law schools are another important training opportunity. I’m not aware of any kind of educational program linked to family law programs in law schools at all that deals with the psychological aspects of DV – or on how to recognize or manage it once determined. (Family Lawyer)*

## 7.0 Conclusion

The literature review, environmental scan and qualitative research serve to highlight the silence that surrounds DV in affluent communities. This population is rarely studied, and few services exist to meet the needs of survivors with higher socioeconomic status. Because of the dearth of research and evaluation data, no best practices have been identified for working with affluent survivors. However, a number of consistent themes emerged from the research and practice data gathered for this study, including:

- The need to recognize the culture of affluence as a distinct culture, and understand the ways in which it impacts disclosure, help-seeking, and the capacity to escape a violent relationship
- The ways in which increased resources and education levels can result in highly sophisticated forms of abuse
- The prominence of technological, legal and financial abuse among perpetrators in affluent communities
- The need to target outreach to venues where affluent women already congregate as customary pathways to services (i.e., police or other service providers) are not generally relevant for this population
- The need to specifically identify affluent women in messaging around DV because of the myth that DV does not happen among wealthy or socially prominent classes
- Key challenges that affluent survivors are likely to face, including challenges related to:
  - Cognitive dissonance (e.g., that a highly capable woman could have married an abusive man, or that DV doesn’t happen to ‘people like us’)
  - Not being believed because of the status of the abuser
  - Cultural norms and values related to discretion and keeping up appearances
  - Risks to one’s career or lifestyle

- Issues related to eligibility criteria (i.e., the survivor has no access to financial resources but because she has money on paper, she is not eligible for low- or no-cost services)
- Risks associated with lack of empathy, discrimination and misguided assumptions on the part of service providers

All of these findings have significant implications for the DV sector in Calgary, suggesting the need for specialized outreach, training and capacity building (within and beyond the DV sector), awareness raising campaigns, and advocacy.

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## Appendix A: Literature review strategy

A stepwise approach was adopted for the literature review, beginning with development of a set of search terms (e.g., “upscale violence”, “domestic violence”, “family violence”, “intimate partner violence”, “middle class”, “upper class”, “affluent women”, “women of means”). These terms were searched in PsycINFO and MEDLINE. The tables of contents of selected journals were also reviewed. In addition the tables of content of the following journals were reviewed, typically between the years of 2010 to 2017: *Affilia*, *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Journal of Violence Against Women*. Finally, a scan of articles by authors who cited Weitzman’s (2000) seminal book regarding upscale violence was completed.

Titles of articles identified in these searches were then reviewed for relevance and abstracts of potentially relevant articles were read. Those articles appearing to be of greatest relevance were reviewed in full. In addition, the reference lists of reviewed articles were scanned to identify any additional publications, and key informants were asked to recommend key articles. While there is a massive volume of literature related to DV amongst lower SES women, there appears to be a significant paucity of research related to DV experienced by affluent women. Given the dearth of results, the support of a university librarian was secured, but only one additional publication was found.

A total of 12 articles, one PhD dissertation, and a book were reviewed; of these, only six were specific to upscale violence, with the remaining having some mention of socioeconomic status in relation to DV (generally that low SES has a greater association with DV), the culture of affluence, and/or help-seeking behaviours in DV. Key informants confirmed that there is very little research in this area. The author of one article specifically related to upscale violence indicated awareness only of her study and that of Weitzman (2000). However, it should be noted that resources for this project were limited and a more comprehensive search was not possible. Perhaps a broader search strategy with an expanded range of search terms and databases might reveal additional research or articles of relevance.

## Appendix B: Discussion Guide for Women with Lived Experience

### Preamble:

Thank you for participating. We recognize that this is a very personal topic and appreciate your willingness to share your experiences. You've been asked to participate in this discussion because each of you can offer the kinds of insights that can only come with lived experience. Tonight, I'll be asking you to briefly share something about your own experience, including some of the unique challenges you faced, what you found helpful, and what types of services or approaches you think are needed for women who are in similar circumstances. Please share only what you're comfortable sharing, and feel free to pass on a question if you don't want to answer it.

We're aware that reflecting back on past experiences can sometimes resurface some of the trauma you experienced. If you experience that, or if you just need to debrief a little bit after this discussion, we would encourage you to contact Carrie, who will be available by phone tonight and throughout the week.

Highlights and quotes from our discussion will be summarized in a report for Sageesse – but none of your names will be included and all identifying information will be removed. Similarly, outside this room, I will not share 'who said what' – and I would ask that everyone else in the group agrees to keep that information confidential when you leave tonight. Is everyone okay with that?

With your permission, I'd like to record the session (just in case I miss something in my notes). The only people that will have access to the recording are me, the other researcher Kathy GermAnn, and my transcriptionist. The recording will be erased as soon as the transcript is completed, and the transcript will be deleted and shredded when the project is completed. Is everyone okay with recording the conversation?

Let me tell you a bit about the purpose of the discussion. Sageesse wants to develop services that will meet the needs of affluent women who are experiencing domestic violence. Research and experience suggests that they are often isolated and don't access services. We'd like to understand more about some of the challenges and needs that are unique to affluent women who experiencing violence. What kinds of supports are needed? What barriers to do they face in accessing support? What would help to address those barriers? How do we reach this population?

Do you have any questions about any of that?

### Questions

1. Could you each please introduce yourself and tell us why you thought it was important to participate in this discussion?
2. I want to start by asking you to tell us something about your own experience of domestic violence.
  - a. What challenges did you face during and after the relationship?
  - b. How did you make sense of what was happening? Did the fact that you had more financial resources than many other women who experience DV influence how you dealt with what was happening? If yes, in what ways?
  - c. What challenges or circumstances do you think are unique to affluent women?

3. What kind of help did you seek out during and after the relationship?
  - a. Who did you draw on for support?
    - i. What role did friends and family play?
  - b. Did you access any DV services?
    - i. If yes, how did you find out about them?
    - ii. If no, what stopped you from accessing those services?
  - c. Did you access any other types of services to help you cope with, or leave, the relationship? (e.g., health, counselling, etc.)
4. Which supports were most helpful? Why?
  - a. For those of you who accessed DV services, what was your experience of those services?
  - b. Is there anything that would have made those DV services more helpful?
5. Are there any services or supports that you wish had been available to you? (What/Why?)
  - a. What would have been a good way to let you know about those services?
  - b. What would have helped to make you feel more comfortable accessing them?
6. What recommendations would you make to ensure that affluent women who are experiencing DV are able to access services that meet their needs?
  - a. In an ideal world, what types of services would be available to affluent women who are experiencing DV?
  - b. What communication or outreach strategies would help to draw affluent women to DV services?
  - c. What would help to create service environments that are safe and welcoming for affluent women who are experiencing DV?
  - d. What are the pros and cons of mixing affluent women and women of lesser means in the same support groups?
7. Do you have anything else to add?

## Appendix C: Interview Guide for Lawyers

### Preamble

- Sagesse is exploring ways to better serve the needs of affluent women who are experiencing domestic violence. (Affluent woman according to the research have a family income of \$100,000 or more, we think based on Calgary economics this is closer to \$160,000 or more)
- Research suggests that this population is underserved – however, it doesn't tell us much about how to reach this population or design services for them.
- Because of the lack of research in this area, we are needing to gather information from a variety of sources to try to piece together as rich and comprehensive an understanding of this population as possible.
- As a lawyer, you will likely have encountered affluent women who are experiencing various forms of abuse. Based on your experience, we are interested in hearing your observations about the experiences and needs of these women.
- The information will be shared with Sagesse and its partners in a summary report, but no identifiers will be included.

### Questions

1. We'd like to understand some of the experiences and challenges that are unique to affluent women who are experiencing domestic violence.
  - a. How would you say the experiences of affluent women differ from women of lesser means? What is distinct about their experience of DV?
  - b. What kinds of challenges do they encounter in terms of addressing the DV they are experiencing (i.e., shame, in coping, disclosing to others, help-seeking, etc.)?
    - i. Do they typically have trouble recognizing or acknowledging that they are being abused?
  - c. What unique challenges do they face in going through the divorce process? (long drawn out court process, alimony, child support etc..)
  - d. Based on your experience who do affluent women generally tell about the abuse (friends, doctor, etc..)
  - e. Do women of affluence report accessing services for the abuse (psychologist, EAP, domestic violence services?)
2. When clients disclose DV to you, do you tend to refer them to any services or programs? If so, what kinds of referrals do you make?

- a. Do you refer them to DV programs/supports that serve the general population (i.e., women who are less affluent)?
  - If yes, are your clients likely to follow through on those referrals? (Why/why not?)
  - If no, where do you send them/what kinds of supports do you recommend to them? Do they follow through on these referrals? (Why/why not?)
3. Based on your experience, what kinds of services or supports would be most helpful for this population? Why?
  - a. What kinds of services do your clients most report benefitting from? (dv specific, general psychologist, none?)
4. What would help to create service environments that are safe and welcoming for affluent women who are experiencing DV?
  - a. How important is the physical space/location?
  - b. What do you think might be the pros and cons of mixing affluent women and women of lesser means in the same support groups?
5. Do you have any suggestions for the best ways to let this population know about DV services and supports?
6. Do you have any recommendations for ways that Sagesse could be working with lawyers as a way of reaching out to this population?
7. Do you have anything else to add?

## Appendix C: Organizations that Offer Specialized Services to Affluent Survivors

The following profiles are based on the key informant interviews and website reviews conducted as part of the environmental scan, and include:

Women of Means Escape Network – Silicon Valley (WOMENSV) in California; Women of Means Program Naples Shelter in Florida, The Knoxville Family Justice Center in Tennessee, and The Domestic Violence Action Center in Hawaii.

Other organizations recommended by key informants as working with affluent women, but not contacted for the environmental scan, include:

***The Family Place, Dallas Texas***

<http://www.familyplace.org/aboutus/contact-us>

***The Second Step, Boston Massachusetts***

<https://thesecondstep.org>

***Women’s Advocates Inc., St. Paul, Minnesota***

<http://www.wadvocates.org>

***Shalva***

<http://shalvaonline.org>

Looks like lots of good resources here

***Shalom Bayit – California***

<http://www.shalom-bayit.org>

## 1. Women of Means Escape Network (WOMENSV)

**Location:** Silicon Valley

**Website:** <http://womensv.org>

**Contact:** Ruth Patrick

### **From the WOMENSV website:**

*“Most people think that domestic violence doesn’t happen in areas like ours. Or if it does, then women should have the means to handle it on their own. But domestic violence cuts across all socioeconomic levels, professions, cultures, ages, neighborhoods. And when there are substantial assets involved, the abusive partner often has control over them, even if his wife has her own career.”*

### **Resources and supports offered:**

- A safe, confidential phone line and email address for women to reach out for help
- A website with an online directory of services – legal, financial, counseling, personal safety and relocation, educational, vocational and reference materials on DV in all its forms
- Support and guidance at every stage of the process, from identifying red flags and signs of abuse, through assembling a team and moving through divorce, and on to recovery and starting a new life.
- Three major sets of activities:

#### 1. Direct client service

- A lot of time helping women understand that just because they’re not being physically abused doesn’t mean they’re not being abused
- Weekly support group with two components
  - Education
    - Putting language around what’s happening so people can deal with it
    - Nine signs if you’re being involved with an emotional manipulator
    - Impact on youth and children
    - Safety planning
  - Individuals talking about their experiences

#### 2. Linkage to resources

- Police, attorney, court support accompaniment
- Ongoing safety planning

#### 3. Raising awareness

- Raising awareness in the community – presentations at various groups, meetings, service organizations (e.g., Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Junior League)

- Training therapists and other professionals (See the outline of a course offered by Ruth Patrick of WOMENSV at:  
[http://www.sccpa.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=87&club\\_id=956131&item\\_id=329610](http://www.sccpa.org/content.aspx?page_id=87&club_id=956131&item_id=329610))

### **Support Group Details**

Support groups in the WOMENSV program include two components:

- An educational component - putting language around what is happening so they can deal with it; safety planning; impact on children; how to know you're involved with an emotional manipulator, and so on.
- Each participant has an opportunity to talk about "whatever is on their hearts and minds" – comfort, encouragement, suggestions shared in a special way. Also talking about resources.

## **2. Women of Means Program, Naples Shelter**

**Location:** Naples, Florida

**Website:** <http://naplesshelter.org/wom/>

**Contact:** Elizabeth Thompson, Women of Means Advocate

The Women of Means program is a specific program offered by the Naples Shelter in the wealthy community of Naples, Florida.

### **From the Women of Means program website:**

*"The Women of Means Program supports self-identified affluent women who have specialized needs based on the power, privilege and access to resources by their batterer. This program started in 2006 with peer-to-peer outreach from educated, professional, and privileged women to other women from similar backgrounds who were in need of support. Currently, a full time Advocate facilitates this cutting edge innovative program, which provides supportive services, individual and group counseling, empowerment classes, safety planning and resources."*

### **Resources and supports offered:**

Services specific to Women of Means program:

- Led by a Women of Means Advocate - "affluent women have very specialized needs and so to have someone dedicated to them is really necessary"
- Dedicated phone line and dedicated program for Women of Means
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Safety planning and advocacy
- Currently a book is being written about the Women of Means program (Author: Cecily

Johnston)

Other services available at the Naples Shelter:

- Clinical counseling
- Economic empowerment program
- Prevention Advocate
- Child and Teen Advocates
- Healing arts (see: <http://naplesshelter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/healingarts1.pdf> )
- Transitional housing

### **Support Group Details**

The Advocate for the Women of Means program facilitates a weekly support group of 7 to 8 women. Women in the group are encouraged to discuss:

- What experiences they've had in the past week and what they've learned about themselves from those experiences
- How they feel they've grown
- What boundaries they may have set
- What tools they've used and what they learned from that

The Naples Shelter, home to the Women of Means program, has a healing arts program. This has proven to be a highly beneficial supplement to individual counseling and support group work.

- The program includes meditation, yoga, crystal bowls and various art activities.
- The Shelter also has linkages with numerous external groups, including the Salt Cave, and the Shy Wolf Sanctuary where women can interact with rescued wolves.
- Survivors can freely choose to access the healing arts program

Also at the Women of Means program, the Advocate created a mini-course based on the metaphor of the butterfly.

- She is using this to help women overcome trauma – becoming an adult butterfly who can fly and flourish.
- The course is currently being piloted and getting input from clients; it will be copyrighted in conjunction with the Shelter

### 3. The Domestic Violence Action Center

**Location:** Honolulu, Hawaii

**Website:** <http://www.domesticviolenceactioncenter.org>

**Contact:** Nanci Kreidman

A multi-service agency with 52 staff members, including attorneys, advocates “who help navigate people to freedom and safety”. While there is no dedicated program for women of means, the DVAC engages in significant outreach to affluent women and has developed numerous strategies for doing so.

**From the DVAC website:**

*Since 1990, our agency has been providing legal information and representation to victims. We are a legal resource to other sectors of the community as well. Our programs have become more diversified and in addition to legal services we have a complement of advocates to assist and accompany victims as they seek access to community resources in their pursuit of safety and freedom. Agency work involves a commitment to raising public awareness, community building, outreach to immigrant and ethnic communities as well as cis, trans, non-conforming and non-binary survivors. Specialized training, cultural competency and refined expertise in intimate partner abuse are integral to Domestic Violence Action Center.*

**Resources and supports offered:**

- Risk assessment; safety planning
- Crisis support
- Advocacy for individuals
- Referrals to individual counseling
- Support groups
- Legal help line
- Legal representation in family court actions – divorce, custody, protection orders, post decree and paternity matters
- Retainers with lawyers who have experience with upscale violence issues
- Onsite court program – preparation and accompaniment to court appearances
- Native Hawaiian cultural program
- Advocacy and outreach to teen victims of dating violence
- Community education and material development; community and capacity building
- Professional training
- System reform efforts

#### 4. The Knoxville Family Justice Center

**Location:** Knoxville, Tennessee

**Website:** <https://fjcknoxville.com>

**Contact:** Amy Dilworth

The mission of the Family Justice Center is to provide victims of domestic violence with a single location to access advocacy and other services necessary to build a future of choice, safety and opportunity. This is achieved by:

- Providing a coordinated, comprehensive approach to family violence
- Helping to provide safety for victims and their children
- Working to end the cycle of violence in families
- Improving the criminal justice system's response to family violence

Founded in 2006, the Knoxville FJC is one of 15 Presidential Family Justice Centers in the United States. More than 60 governmental, non-profit, and medical agencies collaborate to provide a coordinated response for victims of family violence.

Services provided include safety planning, danger assessment, orders of protection, prosecution, civil legal assistance, counseling, support groups, access to shelter, employment assistance, housing (short- and long-term), childcare, language interpretation and services for the elderly, individuals with disabilities and other special populations.

**Resources and supports specific to affluent women:**

- Individual counseling
- Support groups specifically for middle and upper class women; held at the Justice Center and also in community – often in churches
- Recent introduction of animal assisted interventions
- “Voices Committee” – long-term affluent survivors who meet monthly. They speak about the “positive side”; do public speaking and training with professionals.
- Community outreach