

GBSV Resource Guide and Review for The University of Western Ontario and Surrounding Area

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Land Acknowledgment

This report was produced on lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. It was worked on in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe Mississauga, adjacent to The Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and in the territory covered by the Williams Treaty.

Context

The transition from high school to university can be challenging to navigate. For many students, it includes moving away from home, often for the first time and gaining independence which can be both unsettling and overwhelming. Many post-secondary institutions around the world offer orientation programs for incoming students as well as resources such as student leaders within residences and faculties with the ultimate goal of supporting adaptation to this new environment. At The University of Western Ontario, the transition to first year is supported by both student leader volunteers (Sophs) and Student leader staff (Dons/Resident Advisors (RAs)). Both of which undergo numerous trainings and workshops prior to the year to prepare them to best support the incoming students.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, gender-based violence and sexual assault became a major topic of discussion due to a number of troubling incidents. The alleged drugging of thirty or more female students during orientation week, as well as other suspected Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV)-related occurrences, that made headlines throughout Ontario. These incidents have inspired students to rally for change, to have their voices to be heard, and to create a safer campus environment for all. This change will require a multi-pronged approach. First, student leaders will have to be trained to respond and provide support to any first-year students who may be victims of such horrific incidents.

Additionally, it will be essential to identify and categorize the multiple campus and London-region resources that can be utilised to support and train student leaders and support victims, with the ultimate goal of preventing GBSV.

My research intends to build a thorough list of training and resources accessible on campus and in the surrounding area of London, Ontario for student leaders and incoming first-year students in order to increase their awareness, as well as protect themselves and their peers.

Orientation Leaders Mandatory Training and Resources

Currently, student leaders at the University of Western Ontario receive comprehensive fundamental training, including modules pertaining to GBSV. Despite its inclusion in the student leader training curriculum, it is crucial to emphasise that the training is still very limited. There are numerous on-campus programs that should be considered as supplementary resources in order to enrich this training. The University of Western Ontario, and in particular the housing and orientation staff, should update the current training to incorporate some of these essential items pertaining to GBSV.

Table 1: Orientation Leader Trainings and Resources

Training/Resource Provided	Brief Description
Framework for helping gender-based violence training	Asynchronous trainings done in the summer on what GBSV is, signs and resources.
Referral training	A training that provides resources for where to send students both internally and externally if certain situations arise (GBSV is one topic included in this training)
Response Protocol for Orientation	This training includes steps for a student leader to take in varying situations (GBSV is one topic included in this training), provided in a small session done the week before orientation
Special contacts with contact cards to keep during orientation	GBSV personnel and resource guide to direct students to the right place, each student leader is given a copy to always keep in case of emergency
GBSV Training	Mandatory training for first-year students and student leaders presented by ANOVA and CREVAWC which discusses topics of consent, the spectrum of sexual violence, unpacking sexual scripts and more. This training was done in January but now required before orientation

Note: The trainings listed in Table 1 are the trainings and resources that were provided to student leaders in the 2021/2022 school year

On Campus Program Summary

Throughout the Western campus and community, education and training programs have largely expanded and diversified to include prevention and response-based programming that supports a wide array of individual needs. In 2020 the volume of programming increased by more than 33% offering 18 programs related to the topics of GBSV (Table 2). In addition to these programs, Western based centers offer additional optional trainings and resources that discuss topics related to GBSV, including but not limited to disclosure and reporting, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), gaslighting and male masculinity (Table 3). It is important to note that none of these programs are mandatory which can significantly limit their exposure and impact on our community.

Table 2: On-Campus Programs and Resources (Western N.D)

Training/Resources Found on Campus	Brief Description
Male Allies on Campus	By participating in this program, male-identifying students develop essential leadership skills in how to stand up against sexual and gender-based violence; acknowledge how their actions, words and behaviours can impact others; and demonstrate what it means to be a male ally.
Educating in the Grey Zone	This session introduces Western’s approach to gender-based violence prevention education. Participants explore gender-based violence, the limitations of historical approaches to prevention, and new directions for prevention education
Disclosure Training	This training is designed to educate faculty, staff and student leaders on their roles and responsibilities for receiving and reporting a disclosure, per Western’s Gender-based and Sexual Violence Policy.
Community Connections: Healthy Relationships	First-year students explore different types of relationships, gain the tools to recognize unhealthy relationships, and learn how to take action to transform their relationships.

Upstander Training	By participating in this program, students learn about the impacts of sexual violence on individuals and communities; examine the links between sexually violent behaviour and a cultural of sexual violence; and learn how to safely apply upstander intervention skills to intervene in situations of sexual violence.
“Can I Kiss You?” Orientation Program	Presented as part of Western’s Orientation events, Mike Domitrz provides skills for verbal consent, bystander intervention, and supporting survivors. The presentation was facilitated by the Gender-based Violence Prevention Education Coordinator, discussing these themes in a university context.
Pleasure and Consent	This program contributes to a conversation around consent by introducing the skills, language, and practices to not only “ask for consent” but ask students to explore desire and centre pleasure for all involved.
Pleasure Packs	This program is intended to normalize talking about pleasure and to broaden students’ understanding of pleasure beyond sex. When students have access to diverse sources of pleasure, they have opportunities to understand themselves, what feels good and ultimately what does not.
ReShaping Locker Room Talk	An ongoing, discussion-based program that engages male-identifying student athletes in exploring topics vital to them as they relate to gender-based violence. The discussion opens space for honest dialogue and planning on how they can reshape locker room talk and its environment to create safer spaces and prevent gender-based violence.
Man Made	A 4-session discussion group designed for male-identifying students to help them find their voice and use it to create change for themselves and their community
The Neurobiological Consequences of Trauma: A Trauma Informed Approach	Trauma-informed practice involves more than adhering to a set of abstract principles. It requires a thorough understanding of the complex and diverse alterations in the many domains of a traumatized person’s development and coping. This training session, delivered by Anova, was offered to members of Western’s Mental Health Team.

Safety Training	This training provides participants with practical skills to support domestic violence survivors in planning for safety in a broad range of contexts and situations. This training session, delivered by Anova, was offered to members of Western’s Mental Health Team.
Cultivating Thriving Educators: Gender-based Violence on Post-Secondary Campuses and Western’s Framework for Prevention	This session introduces the issue of gender-based violence on campus, and Western’s Gender based Violence Prevention Education Framework. The session encourages educators to examine existing programs through a reflective lens and consider two key questions: Who am I [as an educator] in the context of using this framework and the larger campus ecosystem? How does this framework apply to me?
Educational Sanctions	Respondents implicated in gender-based or sexual violence complaints are required to complete education/training sessions to help them understand the implications of their choices and actions.
ReShape Series	The ReShape Series is designed to raise awareness concerning issues of gender-based violence. Programming addresses topics for supporting one another, celebrating our identities, and having critical conversations about how, as a community, we are addressing this important issue at Western. Programs offered as part of the ReShape Series in 2020-21 included: Reclaiming Self-Care and Pleasure (workshop + video series); Pleasure is Power (keynote + discussion); Pleasure on a Plate (video series); and Digital Expression and Consent (video series).

Table 3: GBSV Focused Programs provided by Centers on Campus

On Campus Center	Brief Description	Key Programs
Health and Wellness Western	Contacts both internally and externally for reporting, treatment, and support- this is a good starting point, as a student leader you could direct students here or support them in taking the first step to reach out to someone on this list.	<p>Link: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/index.html</p> <p>Key programs provided by this Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on disclosure, getting help or helping a victim • Resources for next steps
The Learning Network	It provides many webinars, infographics, videos, and podcasts that are based on GBSV topics, these resources are very important as they allow for various issues to be addressed and support a wide range of GBSV concerns that could arise. Key topics include consent, survivor stories, supports for LGBTQ+, Student voices and intimate partner violence.	<p>Link: https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/</p> <p>Key programs provided by this Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcasts and videos on topics such as: consent, survivor stories, support for LGBTQ and more • Webinars on topics such as: trauma informed perspectives, Domestic Violence (DV), workplace harassment and more • Glossary on main terms associated with GBSV • Infographics, Newsletters, Backgrounds & Briefs discussing important subtopics on topics of GBSV
Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children	Provides many online training courses suitable for student leaders, these trainings cover topics such as responding to disclosure and understanding abuse and warning signs. Other resources include lectures on topics such as ending DV, videos/talks on key topics about sex and consent and interactive events throughout the year.	<p>Link: https://www.learningtoendabuse.ca/</p> <p>Key programs provided by this Center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars on topics such as: Fostering good relationships, recognizing warning signs, responding to disclosure, DV assessment and response and building safer workplaces • Events: youth conference on topics such as healthy relationships and masculinity • Infographics, Backgrounds and Briefs discussing important subtopics of GBSV

Off-Campus Resource Guide

Listed below are major non-profit organizations that support individuals in the London region who require support. This is not an exhaustive list as many smaller scale resources can be found through niche searches, however the organizations listed provide a good foundation to seeking help outside of the Western Community.

Table 4: Community Programs and Resources

Organization	Brief Description	Key Programs
Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program	24-hour emergency service and follow-up care for all genders who have or are currently experiencing Sexual Assault (SA) or DV (Very based on physical evidence)	<p>Link: https://www.sjhc.london.on.ca/areas-of-care/sexual-assault-and-domestic-violence-treatment-program</p> <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and Crisis Intervention • Counselling • Physical examinations • STI testing and treatment • Documentation and evidence collection • Safe planning • Referrals
ANOVA	Offers multiple resources including crisis lines, one-on-one and group drop-in counselling, shelter and transitional housing for female-identifying and non-conforming gender persons that have experience SA and DV	<p>Link: https://www.anovafuture.org/education-advocacy/workshops-training/</p> <p>Key Trainings Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent training • Bystander Intervention • Disclosure • Safety Planning • Foundation of GBSV <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24H crisis line • Emergency Shelters • Housing • Counselling • Family Court Support • Male Survivors

Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services	Intervention and Prevention of DV for First Nation community members, one-on-one training, group counselling, traditional teaching circles and advocacy can be provided	<p>Link: https://atlohsa.myshopify.com/</p> <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24H crisis • Support Groups • Social and Community Programs • Emergency Shelter • Housing Support • Justice
Family Services Thames Valley	Short-term counselling based on strengths for women who have experiences SA	<p>Link: https://www.familyservicethamesvalley.com/</p> <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Individual and Family Developmental services
Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration	Prevention and Intervention services mainly in regard to family violence for Muslim and Arabic families	<p>Link: https://mrcssi.com/</p> <p>Key Trainings Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Men Leading Change • Group Facilitated workshops <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based campaign (It's on us) • Counselling and Social Support • Family-centered programs
Changing Ways	Counselling programs for men and women over the age of 18. For men they offer programs to discuss beliefs and attitudes towards DV and learning better coping mechanisms. For women they offer intervention and support for women who have been charged with DV. (Programs also offered in French)	<p>Link: https://www.changingways.on.ca/</p> <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men's Counseling Program • Caring Dads group facilitated counselling • Women intervention and support program

Réseau-femmes du Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario	Support for women and their children who are victims or at risk of GBSV (Francophone)	<p>Link: https://rfsso.ca/</p> <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Intervention • Transitional support • Housing support • Legal services • Financial aid • Support groups • Community connections • Mentorship and guidance (professionally)
Carrefour des Femmes du Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario	Confidential support, awareness and referral services for women dealing with GBSV (Francophone)	<p>Link: https://carrefourfemmes.on.ca/</p> <p>Key Trainings Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic Workshops • Ambassadors club (for teens) • Community and Liaison/Development events <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and Support (individual or group) • Representation • Family court support • Counselling • Information and referrals
Safespace	Offer support to sex-workers and allies, also provides harm reduction and first aid supplies, HIV and STI educational resources and testing, cosmetics, clothing, hygiene, food, peer support and information about other resources. Runs as a drop-in center	<p>Link: https://www.safespaceLondon.ca/</p> <p>Key Supports Provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-in Line • Drop-in center providing supplies and testing • Resources for places that provide extensive care

Final thoughts and recommendations

Orientation is most students' first impression of Western as a whole; introducing the new student to the university's culture, and local community. GBSV and other violent incidences undermine the safety of students and can irreparably damage the reputation of the university. Because of this negative impact on the students, the university, and the community, it is imperative that these issues be addressed, and solutions enacted.

It is essential to identify any gaps in the training provided to student leaders so that necessary steps can be taken to increase confidence among leaders and students in addressing these issues as they arise. The most critical gap at this time appears to be knowledge and skills amongst students and leaders. It is crucial to develop not just the ability to communicate with a student in a risky circumstance, but also the knowledge of where to direct the student and how to continue to provide support.

Although the concept of GBSV extends far beyond the confines of our campus and is not fully under the control of the university, there are still meaningful measures that can be taken within the university to prevent these troubling incidents and support those at risk or affected by GBSV. As previously stated, training is an important part of overcoming the culture that supports toxic behaviours such as SA; however, increasing awareness for the entire student body will improve accountability for the actions seen throughout our campus. Training on GBSV and other select topics should be mandatory for all students and will empower individuals to act in a supportive way when faced with certain situations directly or indirectly.

Increasing community involvement in student support is the final component. Before the announcement of the 2021-2022 orientation events became widely publicised in the media and on campus, there was minimal discussion at Western about GBSV problems. The instructors, teaching assistants, student bodies, and faculties all circulated materials and messages. The events during orientation week prompted many discussions and changes to training practices. I would recommend that the school mount a coordinated effort towards GBSV by providing additional training and updated clear and concise guidance to both students and staff. I would also recommend that professors and teaching assistants bring up these matters with their students at the beginning of the semester, so that students feel safe confiding in them and are certain that they will not be criticized or penalised academically.

Ultimately, policies must be revised, and prevention must take precedence. Unfortunately, despite policy changes and prevention efforts these types of incidents will not be eliminated, and some students will continue to feel unsafe and uncomfortable to report them to the university. The University of Western Ontario must strive to be a place where each student feels heard and supported, as well as a safe space for all students and survivors. It is time to regroup and begin anew.

References

“Students Begin Unique Training to Prevent Sexual Violence.” *Western News*, 5 Feb. 2022, <https://news.westernu.ca/2022/01/students-begin-unique-training-to-prevent-sexual-violence/>.

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