



Servants Anonymous Society EXIT Program Evaluation

Report on 2016-2017 Findings

June 16, 2017



Evaluated with support from Constellation Consulting Group

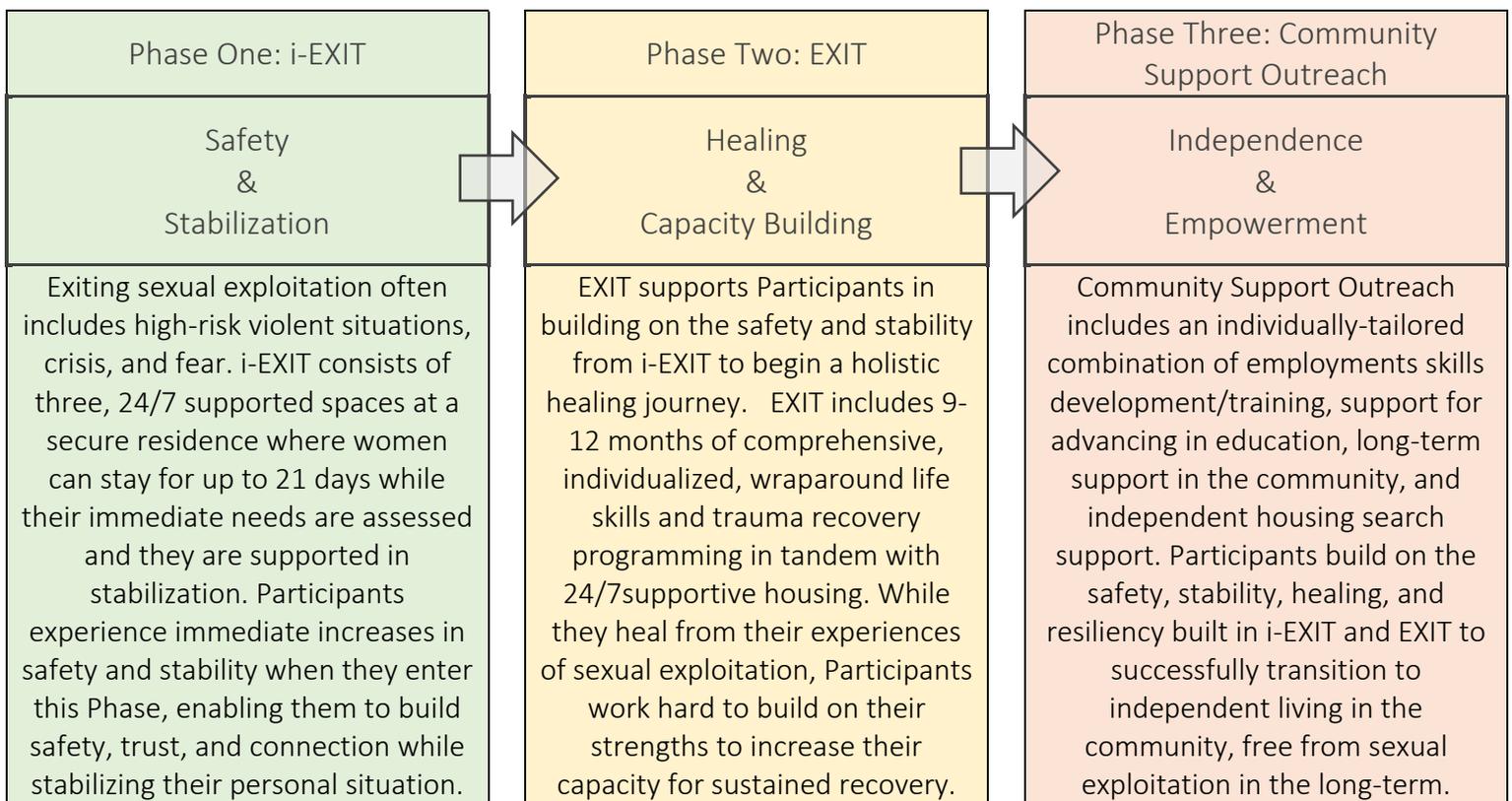
Contents

1.0 Introduction & Background	1
2.0 The EXIT Evaluation Journey	3
2.1 Evaluation Methods and Questions	3
2.2 Information Storage	3
2.3 Evaluation Challenges & Continuous Improvement.....	4
2.4 Future Directions for Evaluation of EXIT	4
3.0 EXIT Program Implementation Journey.....	5
5.0 EXIT Program Outputs, Outcomes, & Impact.....	7
5.1 Who was Impacted by EXIT in 2016-2017?.....	7
5.2 Impact on Participants & Their Children	10
Staff Perspectives	10
In Their Own Words: Participant Stories	10
6.0 Conclusions and Future Directions.....	13
Appendix A: Resources Consulted.....	14

1.0 Introduction & Background

Started as a true grassroots initiative 29 years ago, Servants Anonymous Society (SAS) provides a lifeline for women wanting to exit sexual exploitation. SAS offers immediate, safe, supportive housing and 24/7, non-time-limited, comprehensive individualized support to women and girls (and their children) fleeing sexual exploitation and sex trafficking from across Canada. SAS programming enables girls, women, and their children, to stabilize, heal, reconnect, facilitating not only their exit from sexual exploitation, but to also a transformational positive rebuilding of their lives. SAS is the only organization in Canada that provides 24/7, intensive 1-1 case management, comprehensive, wrap-around, non-time limited programming, and progressive levels of supportive housing that enables exit from sexual exploitation and is not centred upon a Faith-prioritized framework/messaging.

Programming at SAS is delivered as a trauma-informed three-phase continuum of services. The three program phases seamlessly support Participants in their journey from exit and stabilization, to healing, capacity building and life-skills development, through to transitioning into independence and empowerment.



In recognition of the importance of holistically supporting women and girls in their desire to exit sexual exploitation, since June 2015 the Department of Justice Canada has provided generous support for the EXIT Program (Phase Two) at SAS. Evaluation can help

highlight the impact of this support and reveal learnings for continuous program improvement and the establishment of best and promising practices.

SAS has worked with external evaluation experts at Constellation Consulting Group to evaluate the 2016-2017 EXIT program year (March 2016 to March 2017). The current report highlights the impact, learnings, and recommendations revealed through this evaluation.

I dream about my future career. I have discovered many new possibilities that I never believed were options for me.

-EXIT Participant

I used to advertise that I could turn your fantasies into reality. Now I make my own dreams my reality.

-EXIT Participant

Since I was 14, I have dreamt of a career in social work. I think I always knew what my dreams were, but I couldn't always see a reason to work for them.

-EXIT Participant

2.0 The EXIT Evaluation Journey

2.1 Evaluation Methods and Questions

The EXIT Program has been, and is still being, evaluated using a developmental evaluation approach. Developmental evaluation places the evaluator in the role of observer, questioner, and facilitator, supporting a holistic understanding of program implementation and processes, and helping to identify areas of success and challenge, as well as outcomes and impact. The result of using a developmental evaluation approach is a continuous feedback loop that accompanies program innovation as well as point-in-time (e.g. end of project) reporting on successes and challenges. The evaluation of EXIT has been conscientiously utilization-focused meaning it is centered around “how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process”.¹ All evaluation activities are strengths-based, seeking to elevate the voices and stories of Participants while assessing program successes and learnings.

Key evaluation questions for EXIT are:

Process Questions	Outcomes Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To what extent were project activities implemented as planned?○ What types of Participants were reached through the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To what extent are key outcomes being achieved?○ What impact has programming had on the community as a whole?

A mix of quantitative, and qualitative information gathering methods have been implemented to ensure robust evaluation results. Information that has been gathered and used for evaluating EXIT in the 2016-2017 year includes:

- Demographic data (e.g. age, number of children);
- Process data (e.g. program referral source);
- Participant outcome information; and
- Participant stories.

2.2 Information Storage

EXIT evaluation information is stored in the secure Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database managed by the Calgary Homeless Foundation. Since the database was developed with homeless sector end-users in mind, SAS is currently working with the Calgary Homeless Foundation to customize database fields to better reflect the information gathered by SAS for the purpose of evaluation. While this update is happening, information has been stored in secure Excel files and case notes.

¹ Patton (2008). Page 37.

2.3 Evaluation Challenges & Continuous Improvement

Since June 2015 the evaluation of EXIT has progressed well, but not without some challenges along the way. Challenges have included:

- Staff turnover, resulting in variations in data collection consistency across the program
- The need to update the HMIS database to better reflect EXIT data fields, resulting in data currently being stored in Excel files and case notes, which increases challenges around data aggregation and reporting
- A Department of Justice Canada reporting format that does not always adequately capture key information from the EXIT program

These challenges have opened new opportunities for learning and improvement of evaluation systems at SAS. Based on the EXIT program evaluation experience, in recent months concrete actions have been taken to improve program evaluation capacity including:

- The development of a comprehensive evaluation framework for SAS that clearly identifies data collection tools and implementation responsibilities (including activities specifically related to EXIT)
- Collaboration with the Calgary Homeless Foundation to revise data fields in the HMIS database so that they better reflect SAS programming and can be more easily used for evaluation reporting
- Revision of key data collection tools so that they are streamlined and directly linked to program outcomes (including exit surveys, classroom surveys, etc.)

These evaluation improvements will lead to more effective evaluation of the EXIT program and will help contribute to the development of a robust body of information that can be used to enhance programming, share learnings, and celebrate the positive social impact created by SAS programming (including EXIT).

2.4 Future Directions for Evaluation of EXIT

Building on evaluation learnings and improvements from June 2015 to April 2017, in the 2017-2018 program year it is anticipated that the impact of EXIT will be further examined using the internationally standardized Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology.² The result of an SROI analysis is an SROI ratio that demonstrates how much social value is created for every dollar invested. This type of analysis will provide an innovative assessment of the social value created by EXIT and will reveal opportunities for maximizing social value creation going forward. An SROI analysis conducted from 2009 to 2012 of Phase One³ demonstrated that the program created nearly \$9 in social value for every dollar invested. It is anticipated that an SROI analysis of the EXIT program will similarly reveal significant social value creation and program efficiency.

² See the internationally standardized *Guide to Social Return on Investment* for more details on the methodology. Available online at: <http://www.socialvalueuk.org/resources/sroi-guide/>

³ Formerly SAFE, now i-EXIT.

3.0 EXIT Program Implementation Journey

Developmental evaluation records important information about the program implementation journey while ensuring that evaluation findings can be summarized at important milestones. In 2016-2017 EXIT programming and services were effectively implemented, providing 42

Participants with:

- Safe and supportive housing with on-site programming and services
- Curriculum-based life skills programming sessions
- On-site child care including appropriate activities that promote healthy child development
- Referral to community-based resources and supports (e.g. health, dental, mental health, addictions treatment, counselling etc.)
- Addiction recovery support
- Therapeutic-centered social and recreational activities, including culturally relevant activities
- A holistic community of support

Changes in SAS staff in 2016-2017 impacted EXIT Program implementation, but Participants were nevertheless provided with continuous high-quality service. Most notably, several leadership positions experienced changes in 2016-2017. In September 2016, SAS gained a new Executive Director who had worked within the organization for a number of years and had supported in the role of Interim Executive Director at previous points. Under new leadership, SAS is building on past successes to enhance organizational sustainability and continuously improve programming. In early 2017, under the direction of the new Executive Director, a veteran SAS Program Manager returned to the organization, bringing with her a wealth of program experience, community contacts, and organizational history. In early 2017 SAS also gained a Research, Communications, and Development Manager who is leading improvements to research and evaluation capacity at SAS. These leadership team changes have bolstered EXIT Program implementation and reinforced important program partnerships. In particular, the program's partnership with the Calgary Police Service's Counter Exploitation Unit has been deepened and strengthened and SAS has partnered with external evaluators at Constellation Consulting Group to support ongoing evaluation activities.

EXIT Program implementation was also impacted by fluctuations in SAS' three-phase continuum of service in 2016-2017. In February 2016 there was an interruption in the delivery of Phase One that subsequently impacted the implementation of EXIT (Phase Two). Phase One was discontinued for approximately one year while resources were sought to re-establish the service. In February 2017 a reduced capacity version of Phase One, now called i-EXIT⁴, was established. This new iteration of Phase One has three secure spaces for Participants compared with six spaces previously available. The stabilization that happens in Phase One ensures Participants are

⁴ Formerly called SAFE

ready to engage in the intensive, wrap around supports provided through Phase Two and disruption in Phase One services created challenges for EXIT Program intake, reducing Participant numbers in 2016-2017. While the Department of Justice Canada is supporting the EXIT program until 2018, it is important to understand that EXIT is only one of three Phases of integrated services at SAS. With the re-establishment of Phase One, it is expected that EXIT will have more Participants committing to the program in 2017-2018.

Overall, the evaluation has revealed that while some challenges in program implementation have emerged in 2016-2017, the EXIT Program model is nevertheless sustainable and impactful. Lessons learned through staff transitions and program continuum fluctuations in 2016-2017 will support the ongoing resiliency of the EXIT Program to provide high quality and impactful services for Participants going forward into 2017-2018.

It is a huge advantage to have a safe place like the EXIT classroom where we are free to commit trial and error, and learn appropriate boundaries and behaviors without the judgement of the outside world.

-EXIT Participant

I dream about going back to school. Today is the first time I see that I have many options for my future. I am just at the beginning.

-EXIT Participant

SAS has affected how I interact with and perceive the world as a kind place. This has led me to feel safe enough to dream big. My dreams now seem achievable, and they are.

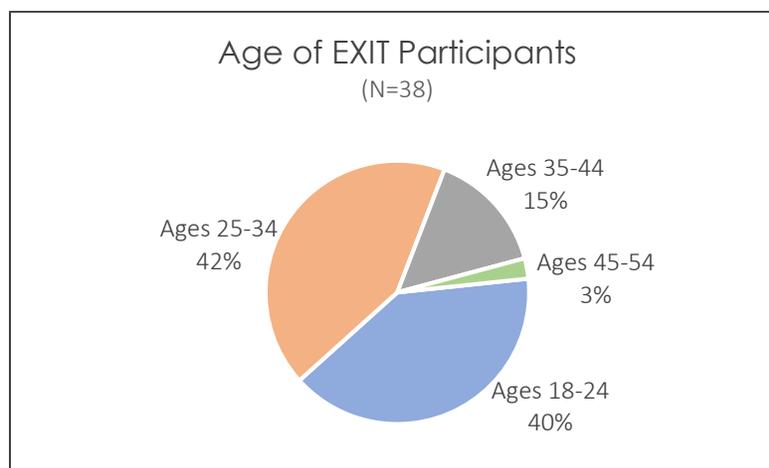
-EXIT Participant

5.0 EXIT Program Outputs, Outcomes, & Impact

5.1 Who was Impacted by EXIT in 2016-2017?

In total, 42 women received housing, supports, and life skills development opportunities through the EXIT Program in 2016-2017.

According to research conducted in Calgary in 2002, the average age when individuals become involved in sexual exploitation is 13 or 14 years old.⁵ In the EXIT Program in 2016-2017, the average age of Participants was 28. Exiting sexual exploitation is often the culmination of a long change and decision process⁶, and the older average age of EXIT Participants highlights the complex, and often lengthy, journey towards exiting and healing.



Individuals involved in sexual exploitation often have complex intersectional identities and experience multiple layers of vulnerability, disadvantage, and marginalization.⁷ According to Hunt (2013), women of Indigenous descent in Canada are particularly vulnerable to abuse, violence, and involvement in the sex trade. In 2016-2017, nearly a quarter (24%) of EXIT Participants identified as First Nations or Metis.

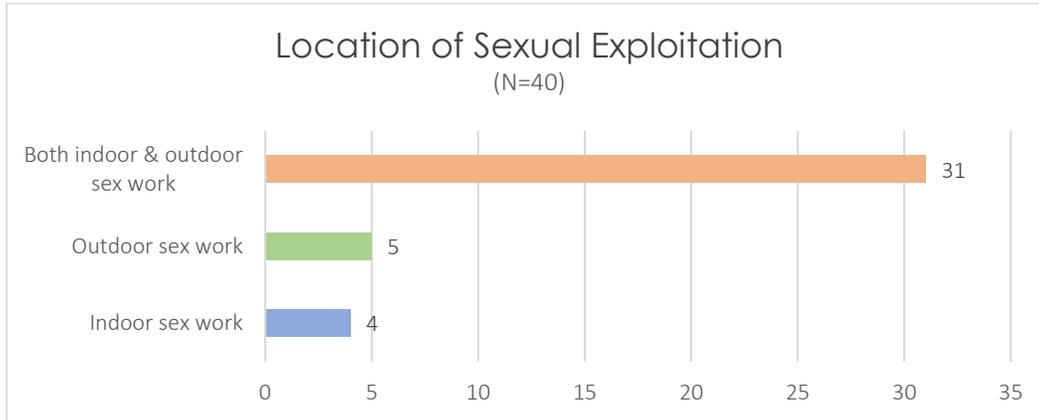
The EXIT Program respects women's rights to choice with programming that is completely voluntary and program pathways that are individualized and client-driven. This approach encourages women to come to EXIT when they feel ready and this is reflected in the fact that the most common referral source in 2016-2017 was self-referral (39%). The second most common point of referral was the Calgary Police Service (19%). Other important referral sources included medical professionals, friends, crisis/outreach/support workers, and substance abuse recovery services.

⁵ McIntyre (2002)

⁶ See for example Prochaska & DiClemente's Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change)

⁷ For a discussion of intersectionality and other theoretical perspectives on sexual exploitation and sex trade see, for example, Gerassi (2015)

The majority of 2016-2017 EXIT Participants indicated that they had been involved in sexual exploitation based both inside (e.g. brothels, internet), and outside (e.g. selling on the street). Although many Participants indicated that they had been physically moved for the purposes of sex work (e.g. to another community) Participants did not self-identify as being ‘trafficked.’



Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked to experiences of sexual exploitation with individuals often becoming involved and entrenched in sexual exploitation to meet their basic needs, like housing. Trading or selling sex to meet basic needs is called ‘survival sex’.⁸ The EXIT Program recognizes that basic needs must be met for Participants to be able to build on their strength and resilience to create sustainable lives for themselves, free from sexual exploitation.



42 women were housed while participating in the EXIT Program in 2016-2017.

Substance abuse is both an antecedent to sexual exploitation and a coping reaction to trauma related to sexual exploitation experiences.⁹ At Program intake:



98% of Participants identified drug use as an issue in their lives.



18% of Participants identified alcohol use as an issue in their lives.

⁸ Van der Meulen et. al (2013)

⁹ Saewyc & Edinburgh (2010) p. 182

Benoit & Millar (2001) highlight that women often attempt to exit sexual exploitation five to six times before they are successful. The EXIT Program understands these struggles and ensures that Participants are able to return to the program whenever they want if their exit is not permanent. The top three reasons why Participants had chosen to leave sexual exploitation and enter the EXIT Program in 2016-2017 were: ¹⁰

1. To improve their quality of life (56%)
2. For their child(ren) (31% - Note: not all Participants have children)
3. Due to fear of physical violence (20%)

The EXIT Program allows Participants to bring children under the age of 18 who are in their care to the Program. At the Program, their children are supported with developmentally appropriate services, activities, and referrals, enabling Participants to work towards building a sustainable life free from sexual exploitation while knowing their children are safe and supported. It also allows Participants to establish or reinforce a positive family relationship and good parenting practices. In 2016-2017:



2 women had children in their care during their participation in EXIT and **18** women had children who were not in their care (e.g. other care arrangements were made, child was adopted, Child Welfare involvement, child over 18, etc.)



2 women were pregnant when they entered the EXIT Program.

The sisterhood at SAS is very strong.

-EXIT Participant

I got pregnant when I was six months clean, and didn't know what I was going to do. EXIT taught me parenting, accountability, responsibility, selflessness, and prioritizing."

-EXIT Participant

¹⁰ NOTE: Participants could cite more than one reason.

5.2 Impact on Participants & Their Children

The EXIT Program is client- driven and each Participant's journey towards recovery and resilience is unique, as are the outcomes and impacts they experience through the EXIT Program. During their time in EXIT, participants are not only supported through housing and on-site supports, but they are also connected to impactful services in the community. In the 2016-2017 program year, Participants were connected with supports and services including:

- Income supports
- Basic needs supports (food, clothing, transportation, etc.)
- Justice system navigation services/supports
- Mental health services (incl. community-based mental health programs, counselling, and therapy)
- Medical/physical health services
- Dental services
- Family/parenting programs/services/supports
- Substance abuse treatment

Staff Perspectives

Staff in the EXIT Program interact with Participants daily and observe the creation of positive social impact through the Program. In the 2016-2017 year, staff observed Participants experiencing positive outcomes such as:

- Improved physical health
- Increased ability to access counselling services to facilitate healing
- Improved mental health
- Development of new life skills
- Reduced substance abuse
- Completion of further education
- Increased access to supportive services in the community through referrals
- Reunification with family and other natural supports
- Increased financial stability
- Positive community involvement and increased volunteering
- Increased access to supports for children
- Positive changes in parenting practices
- Legal issues addressed

In Their Own Words: Participant Stories

Participants have shared numerous stories about the impact EXIT has had on their lives, highlighting positive outcomes like reduced dependence on substances, increased strength and healing, increased self-confidence, better relationships with family, and increased positive peer connections. The following EXIT Participant stories, told in their own words, reveal complex journeys towards healing fostered through the EXIT Program. These stories emphasize the deep transformational impact the Program on Participant lives.

At the age of fifteen, someone told me I could sell my body. The seed had been planted and for the next five years, I worked the streets and was addicted to drugs. My worst experience was being chased in a field to be beaten and raped.

In the midst of my working in the sex trade, my sister first told me about SAS because she herself completed the program. When I became pregnant, I remembered her words, and followed in her steps. After completing a detox treatment, I called SAS.

At SAS, I have to push myself through the EXIT program on a daily basis. That said, it has been better than I could have possibly expected. I now know how to handle a number of things that will help me stay strong in my recovery. I no longer feel like I am searching for fulfillment in the wrong places.

Today, my life has hope. I've learned a lot about myself. The EXIT classroom has exposed me to many new activities, such as yoga, sewing, gardening, science, and even camping. I have discovered I like to go for walks, looking at the beauty in the world. I love having authentic conversations. I enjoy being a busy mother to my son. I appreciate the newfound variety in my life. I've learned that my life is going to be something greater than I ever knew was possible. I dream about my future career. I have discovered many new possibilities that I never believed were options for me. I'm looking forward to taking that first step with beginning work experience this fall with SAS. -EXIT Participant

I decided to leave home when I was thirteen because my parents were getting a divorce. I was already a very troubled kid; I was extremely angry with my parents, and had had an abortion. I survived by sleeping with men for food, shelter, alcohol and cocaine. Through my eyes, I wasn't turning tricks. Now I see my choices for what they were: my body was my survival mechanism.

I had my first of three children at the age of 18. I spent the next fifteen years not turning to the sex trade for support. At the age of 33, this quickly changed when my seven year marriage ended. My then husband left me and my three children. I quickly returned to old behaviors from near decades prior. It is still shocking to me how quickly that can happen.

I spent the next seven years using crack and being pimped out by a woman who also turned tricks herself. I believed she has befriended me. I had no perspective that I was being used by her. I had convinced myself that it was me who was using her. The last year of my life working in the sex trade was the worst. It wasn't until then that I explicitly started accepting money for sex.

My first step towards healing from sexual exploitation was finding recovery from drugs and alcohol. I started attending meetings and found myself a sponsor. I told my sponsor about my history with sexual exploitation. A past SAS Participant herself, it was she who encouraged me to reach out to SAS to join the EXIT program. She knew it was the best choice for me.

Today I am married again, and I am very much enjoying being a grandmother. My life has truly been reinvented. -EXIT Participant

I recently completed my journey with SAS. I am very proud of myself. I've made lifelong friends.

My becoming sober was the first step towards exiting the sex trade. I initially became sober because my body could no longer withstand the abuse. I had a number of health problems. Mentally, I was very tired of the life I was living. However, it was difficult for me to maintain sobriety and stay away from the sex trade because I was surrounded by it, and had felt I had nowhere else to go. I first learned about SAS through a past Participant. When she told me about her experiences with sexual exploitation, I could relate.

I am most proud of myself for setting goals in the EXIT classroom and reaching them. Today I accept myself for who I am. I am now grateful for feelings and emotions, good or bad. I used to take great measures to avoid feeling anything. The hardest part of recovery has been learning to trust others and to trust the healing process.

It was initially very difficult for me to open up and speak up in the EXIT classroom. My trust has improved, however I know I still have a long way to go. Many days at EXIT were very overwhelming. Those days, I would reach out to my assigned key worker for help. She always understood what I was going through; she could help me through anything. She, and my classmates, always made me feel accepted. My key worker gave me many coping strategies, like keeping a journal. I also like to say the Serenity Prayer whenever I feel it might be helpful.

The best thing I learned in the EXIT classroom was accepting that my struggles and feelings are only temporary. Before SAS, I used to live my life day to day, merely surviving. Now, I'm very focused on and excited to going back to school this fall. I'm also nervous! What I dream about most is giving back to youth and women. I hope to become an addictions counselor. -EXIT Participant

Overall, the 2016-2017 evaluation of the EXIT Program revealed that the Program is truly a transformational experience for Participants, setting them up to sustain their freedom from sexual exploitation and developing deep trust so that they will seek the right supports if relapse occurs. Going forward, improved program evaluation activities are anticipated increase capacity to effectively capture the impact of the EXIT Program.

My life before SAS was filled with anger and hurt. I was leading a very dangerous lifestyle...The best part about recovery is being the best mom for my son. SAS has taught me most of all to be content.

-EXIT Participant

6.0 Conclusions and Future Directions

The 2016-2017 EXIT Program evaluation demonstrated that the program is having significant impact on Participants and their children and that initial program implementation has been successful. Data collected about Participants, observations from staff, and stories from Participants have highlighted the numerous ways in which EXIT supports women in their choice to live their lives free from sexual exploitation. New leadership team composition in 2016-2017 has meant the deepening of partnerships, updates and advancements to evaluation activities, and continuous high quality programming at SAS. The evaluation also resulted in important learnings about EXIT Program delivery, evaluation, and possible future directions. Based on learnings garnered in the 2016-2017 EXIT Program evaluation, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Continue effective implementation of the EXIT Program and seek opportunities for service enhancement.

The 2016-2017 evaluation of the EXIT Program revealed that the service creates significant positive social impact for Participants and their children. Continuing the program will enable more Participants to experience the benefits of the Program. Seeking opportunities for service enhancement, such as new partnerships or deepening of partnerships, will ensure that the positive results and learnings from 2016-2017 can be built upon towards the creation of an even more effective service for women seeking to exit sexual exploitation.

2. Continue the i-EXIT Program as an antecedent to the EXIT Program and seek opportunities to expand i-EXIT capacity.

The brief discontinuation of SAS' Phase One program (the i-EXIT Program) was connected to a decrease in the number of Participants successfully engaging in the EXIT Program, revealing the importance of offering i-EXIT prior to EXIT to enable stabilization and trust building that facilitates connection with, and benefit from, the EXIT Program. Currently, i-EXIT is able to offer three spaces to women seeking to exit sexual exploitation, compared to six spaces prior to the service disruption. Expanding i-EXIT capacity could enable safe exits from sexual exploitation and increased engagement with the EXIT Program.

3. Implement evaluation framework and pursue the use of new evaluation methods where possible.

While the 2016-2017 evaluation of the EXIT Program produced important learnings, implementation of the new SAS evaluation framework will further formalize evaluation activities and enable high quality data gathering and storage. Going forward there is an opportunity to expand evaluation activities to test new evaluation methodologies, such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), to garner new perspectives on program efficiency and impact.

Appendix A: Resources Consulted

Benoit, C., Millar, A. (2001). *Dispelling myths and understanding realities: Working conditions, health status, and exiting experiences of sex workers*. Victoria, B.C: The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research.

Gerassi, L. (2015). "From exploitation to industry: Definitions, risks, and consequences of domestic sexual exploitation and sex work among women and girls." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 25(6), 591–605.

Hunt, S. (2013). "Decolonizing sex work: Developing an intersectional indigenous approach." *Selling sex: Experience, advocacy, and research on sex work in Canada*, 82-100.

McIntyre, S. (2002). "Strolling Away." *Department of Justice Canada: Research and Statistics Division*.

Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*. New York: SAGE Publications.

Saewyc, E., & Edinburgh, L. (2010). "Restoring healthy developmental trajectories for sexually exploited young runaway girls: Fostering protective factors and reducing risk behaviors." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46(2), 180-188.

Van der Meulen, E., Durisin, E., Love, V. (2013). "Introduction." *Selling sex: Experience, advocacy, and research on sex work in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.