For Survivors, By Survivors









SAFE
Survivor Advocates for Empowerment









2025
EMPOWERMENT REPORT

SAFE
Survivor Advocates for Empowerment

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

LIZA RODRIGUES

BOARD PRESIDENT



I stepped into the role of President of the Board in early 2025, and it has been both a privilege and a responsibility to serve an organization so deeply rooted in lived experience and survivor leadership. Over the past year, we have seen meaningful growth across all areas of SAFE — in our Board, in our survivor-led SAFE Committee, in the services we offer, and most importantly, in the number of survivors we are able to support. We've also seen growth in our income, allowing us to expand these services and meet rising needs in our community.

While we are not happy that the demand for our services continues to grow, we recognize this as a clear sign that SAFE fills a gap that too many survivors still face. In 2026, we are preparing to meet that need with renewed purpose, deeper partnerships, and a shared vision for what survivor-centred care and advocacy can truly look like.

One of our key goals for 2026 is to become a registered charitable organization — a step that will help us strengthen our funding base, expand our impact, and continue advocating for systems that centre survivors' voices, choices, and safety. We are also committed to increasing the expertise on our Board, bringing in skills and experiences that will help us more effectively achieve SAFE's mission. At the same time, we are working to grow our survivor-led SAFE Committee, ensuring we have the lived experience and peer leadership needed to meet the rising demand for our services.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank every survivor, volunteer, partner, and supporter who walks with us. You are the reason SAFE exists — and the reason it continues to grow.

SURVIVOR STORY

> I believe all of [this] has made me the strong person I am today, and now allows me to help others get out of situations I wish I could have had help getting out of.



Those are the words said today by an amazing adult woman whose abuse story began at a very young age.

She was molested and human trafficked by her foster brother at the young age of 4 and 5.

She was molested everyday at age 13-14 by her Mom's best friend. She took the abuser to court - who was sentenced to two (2) years but got out early for "good behaviour".

In her early twenties she was ruffied at a bar, then taken advantage of by multiple guys in the bar bathroom while security stood around and didn't do anything.

She has also overcome emotional abuse in a same sex relationship.

Her name is Ashley. She is a survivor and is proud to be a member of the SAFE Committee. She bravely shares her story in the hopes to help other victims of abuse and GBV.

SURVIVOR STORY



> **“Leaving was hard and incredibly terrifying, but staying was not an option.”**

Those are the words of an amazing woman, Crystal.

She says: *“Nothing prepares you for the moment in life when you are left with two very clear choices: stay and die or leave and live.”*

Her threshold moment came when she saw her ex-husband on her home security camera with a gun. After all the years of telling her the various ways he thought about killing her, she knew those thoughts were going to become actions.

... her only hope was to leave.

The day she drove away changed the course of her life forever. She loaded up her kids and their pets, put her car in drive, and pressed the gas pedal. She thought to herself “*Is this what it’s like to never go home again? Am I really never going home again?*”

She was both overwhelmed and scared.

SURVIVOR STORY



When I left, I drove away from:

- **My home**
- **My family and friends**
- **My career**
- **My graduate school work**
- **All of my worldly possessions**

She left her home with only what could fit in her car.

One could say that she and her children lost "everything" the day they left their home, but that would not be true. They left behind their material possessions, but they kept their lives. They kept their hope of having a real life, one that was not defined by constant threat.

In Crystal's own words:

"*At 41 years old with two kids in tow, the instant I put the car in drive started a new life of hope, but in the face of incredible fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of continuing to not be believed. Fear of no one helping. Fear of no one making him stop. Fear of eventual permanent separation from my children, just like I had been threatened with for years.*

SURVIVOR STORY



Her name is Crystal. She is a survivor and is proud to be a member of the SAFE Committee. She bravely shares her story in the hopes to help other victims of abuse and GBV.

Leaving was hard and incredibly terrifying, but staying was not an option. Now that we are more than one year in our new home, our new life, I know beyond a reasonable doubt that leaving was not only the right choice, but it was truly our only choice. Thankfully, we found people and systems in our new home that have given us protection. I am happy to say that we have found a life of freedom, safety, and stability. My children are thriving and healing, and I am slowly but surely building a new life.

I am blessed to now live in a place with the opportunity to use my voice in the pursuit of freedom and safety for others. I am free to tell my story and use my experiences to encourage others. I refuse to let the sadness and trauma of the past consume me today. Looking forward to the future, I am planning to devote my life to securing freedom, safety, and stability for other mothers and children with similar experiences – everyone has the right to these basic elements of life. My goal is to help every mother know thatthere is always hope on the other side of the threshold."

Additional Survivor Stories are here:
https://www.survivor-advocates.org/survivor-stories

SAFE
Survivor Advocates
for Empowerment



SUPPORT

We pick you up where you are, and
take you where you want to go



ADVOCACY

Advocating on behalf of people
suffering from gender-based
violence in the forums that matter



FACTS

Provide relevant and timely resources
based on a survivor's specific needs



EDUCATION

Survivor-led education of victims
and the wider community

IMPACT IN 2025

50	Survivors directly supported by SAFE Committee members
8	Events SAFE participated in/hosted
10	Active SAFE Committee Members
14	Workshops delivered
5	Programs
444	Social Media Followers
260	Subscribers to SAFE-News! (newsletter)

As at: December 28, 2025

THE SAFE COMMITTEE

LORRAINE ROLLO

CHAIR



“Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a declared epidemic in Ontario.

Having SAFE there to provide the survivors voice is paramount to supporting victims/survivors of GBV.

Our unique perspective through our lived experience ensures we focus on the needs and voices of those directly affected by violence.”

The SAFE Committee is the heart and soul of SAFE. The Committee is made up of female-identified and non-binary survivors who are no longer in crisis. Their core focus is to provide support and services for victims and survivors and their family members, educating the community through advocacy efforts and speaking engagements, and providing community consultations to organizations who service victims and survivors.

WHO SAFE SUPPORTS

Victims and Survivors

Female-identified, non-binary individuals who have experienced gender-based violence (GBV) or intimate partner violence (IPV).

SAFE supports these individuals to prevent them from before, during and after experiencing abuse.

Support Agencies and Law Enforcement

Professional agencies and police providing professional services to victims and survivors.

SAFE provides a survivor’s voice in each step of engagement.

Community and Government

General public and government representatives.

SAFE organizes events to educate the public to recognize GBV and IPV, how to support those in need, and how we can work together to prevent it. SAFE also advocates for survivors to government representatives at all levels.

JUST THE FACTS

- **Every 6 days a woman in Canada is killed by an intimate partner.**
  ~CBC

- **1 in 8 women and girls globally have suffered rape or sexual assault before turning 18.**
  ~United Nations

- **More than 11 million people in Canada have experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) at least once since the age of 15. The rates are higher for:**
  - **Women with disabilities (55%)**
  - **LGB+ women (67%)**
  - **Indigenous women (61%)**
  - **Women living in poverty (57%)**
  - **Than for all women (44%)**

  ~ Women and Gender Equality Canada

- **Almost ⅔ (64%) of people in Canada know a woman who has experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.**
  ~Canadian Women's Foundation

EVEN MORE FACTS

- **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) was declared an epidemic in Peel Region in 2023. It is the main reason for referrals to Peel Children's Aid Society, representing roughly ⅓ of all referrals to the agency and 58% of referrals from police.**
  ~ Dave Irish/CBC

- **In Canada, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men will experience sexual violence in their life.**
  ~ Statistics Canada

- **59% of transgender and gender-diverse people experience violent victimization compared to 37% of cisgender individuals.**
  ~ Women and Gender Equality Canada

- **106 (and growing) municipalities have declared Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) an epidemic.**
  ~ https://www.buildingabiggerwave.org/actions/gbv-epidemic

IMPACT STATEMENTS

Names withheld for privacy reasons

> Lorraine Rollo has fearlessly led our committee toward community partnerships, recognition of survivor's voices, and assisted those currently in need. She devotes much of her spare time to this cause as a brave advocate to those who cannot currently speak for themselves.

> I work in the medical profession and have great support and just need to speak to you from your lived experience. You just have a better understanding of where I'm at.

> Nice session.
> Gave safe space to everyone to talk.

> Very nice session. I got lot of good feeling of sharing and hearing someone story.

IMPACT STATEMENTS

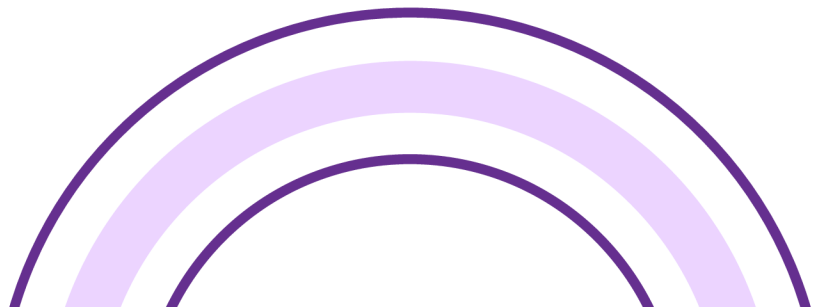
Names withheld for privacy reasons

In every way possible I felt safe sharing my experience (trauma, abuse and fears) with the facilitators. I felt the facilitators believed in me and my want/need to work through and process things in order to better myself.

The knowledge, through sharing their experience, was so very supportive knowing that I "had" this group; and, knowing I was going to be able to meet gave me a sense of self prioritizing and a safe place to discuss what the week held.

I am definitely more aware of how my abuse is valid and yet does not define me. I feel connected to a community that exists, not in secret because we need to be embarrassed, but not spoken about because that is not WHO we are.

A community that recognizes my pain and appreciates the strength it took for me to live in it, work through it and come out strong on the other side. It's hard to describe how abuse makes me feel, but I know the ladies in my group understand it and that made all the difference in the world for me to accept myself as a "survivor".



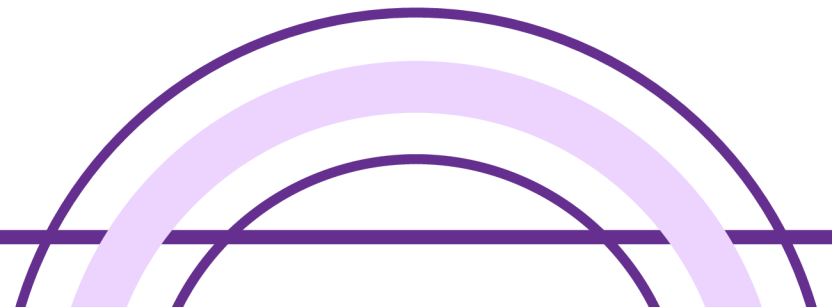
IMPACT STATEMENTS

Names withheld for privacy reasons

> Something deeply healing about being in a group of facilitators who have walked through the path and survived and thrived. I have made practical changes to my life and self-care/health habits because of SAFE.
>
> I felt accepted for who I am and who I wanted to become based on what I have experienced. I felt no judgment or pity.

> I felt supported, encouraged, not judged. I was always happy and glad to come. SAFE has been the highpoint of my week for 8 weeks and my lifeline to better support and mental health.

> I was able to share things from my perspective as a black/racialized woman and felt safe and understood doing it.



IMPACT STATEMENTS

Collaborating with SAFE through our RISE program has been an incredibly impactful experience. SAFE's survivor-led approach aligns perfectly with our mission to support women experiencing gender-based violence. Together, we have created a safe and welcoming space for women to connect, share, and heal. The support and expertise SAFE brings to our sessions have made a meaningful difference in the lives of the participants, and we are proud to partner with such a dedicated organization.
~ Sonja Johnson, Manager Career & Loan Services - ACHEV



"We are absolutely thrilled about the success of the "Rise Together: Community Against Gender-Based Violence" proposal and the meaningful work ahead with SAFE. This partnership holds immense promise, and we are honoured to collaborate with such a passionate and dedicated team.

We eagerly anticipate the journey ahead and the collective impact we will make together."

achēv

WWW.ACHEV.CA

IMPACT STATEMENTS

“Through our partnership with SAFE, Achēv’s Stronger Together program has significantly strengthened frontline and community capacity to recognize, respond to, and support individuals impacted by gender-based violence (GBV). Together, we have equipped board members, staff, mentors, volunteers, and facilitators across organizations such as Moyo Health & Community Services, Courage in Action, Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto, and the Women’s Centre of Halton with practical, trauma-informed tools they can apply immediately in their work. Staff participants consistently reported increased awareness, enhanced confidence, and accessible strategies for providing survivor-centred support within their programs.

This collaboration has also contributed to the creation of safe, empowering learning environments for women, newcomers, and community members. Through webinars and in-person workshops grounded in storytelling, reflection, and open dialogue, participants engaged deeply with topics such as healthy relationships, self-compassion, and personal care needs. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants expressing appreciation for the validation, safety, and transparency fostered within these sessions, with many requesting repeat workshops and emphasizing the continued need for these supports in community settings.

SAFE’s survivor-centered, community-driven approach ensures participants feel seen, heard, and supported throughout their journey. By empowering individuals and organizations to understand their role in preventing and addressing GBV, this partnership is helping foster a broader culture of accountability, care, and collective resilience. supporting my clients. This is a critical and invaluable service.”

Samantha Iyere
Manager, Career and Newcomer Services | Achēv

IMPACT STATEMENTS

“Through our partnership with SAFE, Achēv’s Stronger Together program has strengthened frontline capacity across multiple community organizations by equipping board members, staff, volunteers, and facilitators with practical, trauma-informed tools to better support survivors.

Participants consistently shared that the sessions increased their awareness and provided strategies they could implement immediately in their work. This collaboration has also created safe, empowering spaces for women and newcomers to learn, share lived experiences, and access meaningful support that many have expressed a strong need to continue.”

“I have found the Peer Support program to be invaluable in supporting my clients. This is a critical and invaluable service.

Samantha Iyere
Manager, Career and Newcomer Services | Achēv

IMPACT STATEMENTS

We are grateful for our partnership with SAFE, through which we have been able to deliver three peer support programs to our shelter and outreach clients this year. Peer support brings a different kind of sisterhood to our women and gives them the opportunity to speak openly and without fear of judgement from women who have been through similar experiences. We are lucky to have this great peer support resource in Halton and look forward to continued partnership and work together.

Sarah Byrne, MSW, RSW
Director of Client Services | Halton Women's Place

COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

HVPC

achēv

RISE PROGRAM
Providing Support to Women Experiencing Abuse

Halton Women's Place
Healthy Relationships • Healthy Communities

STRONGER TOGETHER: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SUPPORT
Gender-Based Violence Affects Us All. So Does the Solution.

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE OF HALTON

CERTIFICATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

HVPC
HALTON VIOLENCE PREVENTION COUNCIL

Halton Women's Place

HALTON REGIONAL POLICE

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE OF HALTON

ROCK

safeTALK

Community Development Halton

Mental Health Commission of Canada / Commission de la santé mentale du Canada
Mental Health First Aid Canada

Find Crisis Supports

SAVIS of Halton

THRIVE counselling

BURLINGTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Bringing life to business

FINANCIALS

Survivor Advocates for Empowerment		
Statement of Financial Position		
For the period ending July 31, 2025		
ASSETS		
Current Assets:		
Cash	$	3,745
Prepaid Expenses		718
Total current assets		4,463
Total assets	**$**	**4,463**
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities:		
Deferred contributions (Note 1)	$	2,000
Total current liabilities		2,000
Total liabilities	**$**	**2,000**
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	$	2,463
Total net assets	**$**	**2,463**
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**$**	**4,463**

NOTE 1: DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS – CONTINGENT GIFT

During the year, the Organization received a commitment of $2,000 from a donor. The contribution is contingent upon the Organization obtaining registered charitable status, which would enable it to issue an official donation receipt for income tax purposes. As of the financial statement date, the charitable status had not yet been granted. Accordingly, in accordance with the deferral method of accounting for contributions, this amount has not been recognized as revenue and is included in deferred contributions on the statement of financial position. Revenue will be recognized once the condition has been met.

SAFE
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For Survivors, By Survivors



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

MISSION

SAFE's mission is to address and prevent specific barriers faced by victims and survivors of gender-based violence, their families, and their friends by providing:

1. **Peer support, discussion groups, outreach programs, and workshops catered to the specific needs of survivors, as identified by survivors.**
2. **Educational programs to and consulting with community organizations about gender-based violence from the perspective of survivors with lived experience.**

SAFE offers a range of peer-led services for those affected by Gender-based Violence in the Halton Region and surrounding communities.
Whether you're looking for emotional support, advocacy, education or connection to resources, our services are grounded in lived experience and built to honour your unique journey. You are always believed. You are never alone.

Survivor Peer Support

Companionship to recovery

Sexual Assault Awareness

Events, workshops and speaking engagements

Advocating for Survivors

Empowering the survivor's voice

Speakers Bureau

Sharing experiences and educational topics

Public Education

Educational programs for the community and professionals

Resources

Creating resources to assist in existing programs and initatives

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

If you know someone who may need support, feel free to refer them directly to SAFE via:


info@survivor-advocates.org


www.survivor-advocates.org


safe_advocates


survivoradvocatesforempowerment


survivoradvocatesforempowerment


@SAFE-SurvivorAdvocates