

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

While this study was completed under a limited timeline the results provide a feasible and informed course of action for providing immediate relief to under-funded shelters.

The existing funding for INAC shelters enables them to provide women and children with a place to stay, but little more. Some shelters are able to provide suitable programming for the residents, and some are able to provide outreach services. None are able to provide the full range of core services described in section 2.1.1.

Most shelters have stretched their resources to the limit to provide their existing services. As a result, staff are underpaid, overworked, are sometimes underqualified; there is high staff turnover; the facility and furnishings are in poor condition; and the quality of the services suffers. Some shelters face the need to close their doors, at least temporarily. There is a clear need for additional operational funding for all INAC shelters.

It was not possible to accurately estimate the cost to INAC if provincially-funded shelters were to bill back for services to people normally resident on reserve, because most provinces do not track the constitutional status or resident of shelter clients.

Recommendations

1. As soon as possible, introduce a new funding formula for shelters that takes into account province of operation, size of the shelter, and remoteness of the shelter. The funding levels should enable shelters to provide the core services without relying on fundraising. A draft funding formula is provided in Appendix B.
2. Develop standards for shelter service provision to which all funded shelters must adhere.
3. Support shelters as they upgrade staff training and the condition of the facilities (e.g., furnishings, vehicles, etc.) so that they meet adequate standards.
4. Address the governance structure of the shelters.
 - a. Research should be completed to assess the issues related to Band management and explore setting-up INAC shelters as non-profit societies and/or working towards alternative funding arrangements.
5. Conduct a full review of the funding prior to the lapse of the second year. The funding formula may require revision at that time, to reflect the actual needs of the shelters once they start delivering all of the core services. Opportunities would be available to shelters for revising the funding formula in collaboration with INAC.
 - a. One option could utilize previous years' expenses, adjusted for inflation and shifting occupancy rates, allowing for local variations in costs, and enabling the shelter to cover its basic expenses.

- b. A mechanism that is flexibility and able to respond to changing conditions (e.g., large increases in gas prices) or to changes in the services provided by the shelter should be integrated into the final formula.
6. Revise the reporting requirements for shelters to enable an assessment of outcomes as well as compliance with standards. Introduce the new reporting requirements in a phased manner, providing training for the shelters in completing the reporting forms.
7. Arrange for annual reviews (regional peer review) to assess adherence to standards, and to consult with the shelter about ways of improving services.
 - a. Ensure that existing shelters are funded adequately before adding new shelters.
 - b. Regional peer reviews would assist in taking any provincial legislation into consideration.
8. Establish a plan for maintenance of facility and operational equipment, as well as vehicles. This will assist in setting standards that all INAC shelters would follow for ensuring the condition of the facilities.
 - a. Developing the plan could be a part of the annual reviews. Shelters preferred this to remain at the federal level due to INACs fiduciary responsibilities. If travel is an issue, the Band housing department may be able to assist in assessing local risks and repairs.
 - b. A maintenance plan could include a life expectancy table for all shelter operations, such as the building, furnishings, computers, etc. Shelters could develop longitudinal budgets and repair/replacement schedules.
9. Address the broader issue of how to manage the FVPP prevention dollars in relation to increases in shelter budgets, particularly with the Core Services of shelters including outreach activities. It was suggested that adequately reaching people in remote and isolated areas is a significant challenge to the FVPP outreach objective.
 - a. FVPP should consider forming linkages with Child and Family Services to deliver family violence outreach in remote and isolated areas.
 - b. FVPP should develop a plan for outreach within a 2-year timeframe
 - c. FVPP may want to explore focussing FVPP dollars on reaching people in remote and isolated areas
 - d. FVPP may also want to consider allocating FVPP dollars to communities without INAC funded shelter services, taking into consideration the merit of having prevention delivered by INAC shelters.

10. Explore a continuum of services model. The federal government funds several related programs on-reserve, such as Treatment Centres, Medical Services, Suicide Prevention programs, CMHC, etc.
 - a. FVPP should investigate forming linkages with these programs and encouraging that such programs become more proactive in supporting families in living violence-free. This work would serve to benefit all reserves, and not only those with shelters.
 - b. For example, Medical Services offered through Health Canada should provide prevention medical transportation for women and children who require assistance with leaving their homes to safety.
 - c. At a minimum, FVPP should develop relationships with other federal programs that would improve the ability of women and children to escape violence and seek safety, who live in isolated and remote areas. The Yukon model of having an emergency strategy in-place for women who would need an air-lift to a safe place should be consulted in greater detail.
 - d. Impact analyses should be performed and strategies developed to cope with the loss of critical programming, such as the implications of reduced services regarding Legal Aid.

11. Monitor the ability of shelters in remote and isolated areas to recruit and retain staff.
 - a. A strategy may be required to further encourage qualified staff to work in these shelters. One option may be to examine the Isolation Pay Allowance program in conjunction with the effects of the new funding formula on the shelters.

12. Explore providing a central web-space for secure shelter client data. This will avoid potential loss of data due to computer crashes, etc.

13. Explore the feasibility of outfitting INAC shelters with Internet access and video conferencing equipment to facilitate networking and staff training (a particular issue in remote areas). There are increasing support networks for broadband Internet access and video conferencing.

14. Consider issues related to women and children needing to flee their homes to avoid family violence.
 - a. Explore community-based programs that support the removal of the abuser from the home and the treatment of the perpetrator should be researched, tested, and expanded.
 - b. Continue to keep abreast of the June 20, 2006 update with respect to Matrimonial Real Property with references to family violence.