

Basis of Unity

The Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region (SASC) believes that:

1. Every woman has the right to control her own body and life.
2. Sexual violence against women and children is both a crime and a human rights violation.
3. Sexual Assault is a profoundly damaging experience: physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally.
4. The victim of Sexual Assault is never responsible for the assault. Full responsibility lies with the perpetrator.
5. Any sexual act between a child and an adult constitutes sexual assault, the responsibility for which lies solely with the adult.
6. Each individual, our community and our society has a responsibility to both provide support and assistance to women who have been sexually assaulted and to work toward ending sexual violence.
7. Sexual Violence is a tactic of power and control used to reinforce the perpetrator's dominance over women and children.
8. Sexual violence is perpetuated by a society that reinforces inequality between its members. We acknowledge that there is a fundamental power imbalance in our patriarchal society that is based on privilege and access to resources.
9. All forms of oppression are damaging. Sexism is but one of the oppressions used to violate and control women and children. Others are racism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, ageism, lesbophobia and discrimination based on cultural, ethnic or religious background. These oppressions, which are systemic and pervasive on individual and organizational levels, establish and maintain unequal power relationships in society. The impact of sexual assault is compounded by these oppressions.
10. It is essential to the vision, political analysis and direction of SASC that we recognize the historical contribution to the anti-sexual violence movement made by black women, First Nations women, women of colour, disabled women, lesbians, Jewish women, older women, poor women, and women whose first language and culture is not English.
11. Criticism from black women, aboriginal women, women of colour, disabled women and lesbians that the feminist movement excludes them is valid. Therefore these women must be considered vital members of SASC and their voices must be heard.
12. In order to bring about broad-based social change, prevention-oriented education and political action are essential.
13. Institutions such as law enforcement agencies and the judicial system are sexist and may work to revictimize women.

Basis of Unity (continued)

14. Psychiatry and its institutions are often sexist and punitive. Psychiatry can be used as a means of social control by: coercing women to adjust to and accept traditional female roles, pathologizing their experiences, and masking their legitimate emotional pain through the use of over-medication and other forms of punishment. SASC supports and encourages labels only when they are empowering and defined by women's own experiences.
15. Confidentiality is a necessity in providing the kind of safety in which survivors can begin their healing.
16. The work required to end both the causes and effects of sexual violence needs to be led and directed by women because of the existing power imbalance between women and men in society.
17. Patriarchal systems maintain power imbalances and perpetuate systemic violence and oppression. We are therefore committed to model alternative systems that ensure consensual decision-making at SASC.
18. Self-care is a political tool that sustains our work by identifying barriers that prevent us from taking care of ourselves and supporting each other.