



WISH Drop-In
Centre Society
Celebrating 35 Years of Supporting Sex Workers

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To Whom it May Concern

Re. 342 Alexander Street – Operations Management Plan

The mission of WISH is to improve the health, safety and well-being of women who are involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade. WISH works with women who routinely face discrimination, violence, stigma, social exclusion, chronic poverty and homelessness. WISH provides women with immediate health safety needs (such as overnight safety, hot meals, showers, harm reduction supplies, health clinic and more) and capacity-building programs (such as literacy programming, supportive employment, transitioning/exiting/retiring supports, Indigenous programming, and music therapy). WISH is a non-judgemental, feminist support service organization that strives to work with each woman in whatever ways she may need.

For 35 years, WISH has been a safe space for Vancouver's most vulnerable and marginalized women. WISH is a place where women who face considerable intersectional barriers can be safe and stigma-free, and where they can start to heal from trauma. The core values of WISH are: acceptance, caring, dignity and respect. With these values, WISH works towards a vision that every woman should have access to opportunities to make free, healthy, and positive choices.

WISH Drop-In Centre Society has funding from BC Housing, and with support from the City of Vancouver, seeks to operate a 24-hour temporary emergency shelter for self-identified sex working women at 342 Alexander Street, Vancouver, opening early August 2020.

This Operations Management Plan (OMP) is a brief description of the proposed shelter and its program, in order to increase awareness and understanding of WISH's intentions. The proposed program was built in consultation with more than 35 current WISH participants, approximately 30 WISH staff, all members of the WISH Board of Directors, as well as in consultation with key stakeholder partners in the community with considerable expertise delivering comprehensive shelter and housing options to members of the Downtown Eastside community. These have included our partners at RainCity Housing, Atira Women's Resource Society, PHS Community Services Society, and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.

The following is a basic outline of the intended operations of a WISH shelter:

- The shelter will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Participants who access the shelter will self-identify as women (cis, trans, or two-spirit), be 19 years of age or older, and have past or present experience in sex work.
- The shelter will operate in compliance with all BC Housing, City of Vancouver, and Worksafe BC regulations and reporting requirements.
- A minimum of two staff will be on the premises at all times. As the shelter will be physically adjacent and connected to the existing WISH drop-in and offices, there will be additional WISH staff on site at all times. The shelter manager and/or supervisor will be on call.
- The WISH shelter will provide dignified sleeping opportunities for thirty two cis, trans, and two-spirited women. A certain amount of these beds will be for participants seeking short term respite beds, while the majority will be with a longer-term focus, while housing placement is worked on.
- Safety and security will be a priority for both participants and staff, and the building will feature participant lockers, valuables storage, and secure entry/exits that are wheelchair accessible.
- Hot showers and laundry services will be available for shelter participants. Clean towels and hygiene products will be provided. Participants can access clothing, first aid, toiletry and cosmetics donations in the existing, adjoining drop-in centre.
- The shelter will take a harm reductive approach to participant care.
- Pets will be permitted to stay with their owners provided they are contained or leashed.
- There will be no guests permitted.
- Food service for shelter participants will take place in the existing WISH drop-in centre, save for a bagged lunch that will be provided while the drop-in is closed and available in the shelter. These meals include dinner, midnight meal, breakfast, two snacks, plus the additional afternoon bagged lunch. All meals are prepared in the existing WISH drop-in centre kitchen; a Vancouver Coastal Health approved food establishment.
- Within the shelter program, a caseworker and a counsellor will be hired to work primarily with shelter participants.
- As per the existing WISH Codes of Conduct, racism, discrimination, homophobia, sexism, transphobia, bullying, harassment, or violence will be unacceptable.
- Staff will be trained in: harm reductive philosophy, crisis intervention and de-escalation, mental health and addiction, First Aid, emergency processes, and overdose response.
- All emergency processes will be reviewed yearly by the existing WISH Joint Occupational Safety and Health Committee.
- The shelter will work closely with the Vancouver Police Department and ambulance services to ensure safety for all, including participants, staff, peers, and volunteers.

- The WISH Supportive Employment Program (SEP)'s Safety Patrol will do daily sweeps of the street and alley surrounding WISH to remove any garbage and potential hazardous materials. These peers are compensated through the WISH Supportive Employment Program budget.
- WISH is committed to maintaining good relationships with its existing neighbours on Alexander Street with whom the alley is shared. As such, information and contact information will be given to these neighbours regarding the expansion of the WISH facility and programming.

WISH is committed to providing safe and dignified shelter to women working in Vancouver's street based sex trade. WISH has a 35-year proven track record of positively and proactively working with the city's most vulnerable women, and is recognized as an organization that many women trust to do them no harm.

Thank you for working with WISH Drop-In Centre Society in creating this life-saving space that will increase the health, safety, and wellbeing for women in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mebrat Beyene', written in a cursive style.

Mebrat Beyene, Executive Director
WISH Drop-In Centre Society