



Social Services Workers on the Frontline of Gender-Based Violence Response

OVERVIEW

I, Alice Mūrage, am one of the researchers undertaking the above project. The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of social services workers who support survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in British Columbia, and specifically Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley Region. This research will allow us to identify work-related and systemic barriers faced by this group of workers and inform workplace and policy changes to better support their work on frontlines of GBV, and by extension, survivors of GBV. This project is a partnership between the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society (VAFCS) and researchers at Simon Fraser University (SFU) affiliated with the Pacific Institute on Pathogens, Pandemics and Society. The project commenced in January 2024 and will be completed by January 2026. It is funded by the Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) through its Gender-Based Violence Program.

As part of this study, you are invited to participate in an in-person or a virtual focus group discussion if you are a social services worker supporting survivors of GBV in Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley Region. This discussion will consult with you on your experiences at work. In this project, social services workers include all workers who directly support individuals experiencing GBV, including shelter workers, crisis center workers, peer workers, among other service workers. These services could be provided in various settings including through non-profit organizations, grassroots organizations, community centers, neighborhood houses, health care centers, among other settings. This includes full-time workers, part-time workers, and casual workers, among other work arrangements.

Results from the focus group will be used by project researchers at Simon Fraser University and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society to produce research and advocacy outputs (such as a project report, an action plan, academic articles, policy briefs, and presentations) and to support recommendations for workplace and policy changes. By participating in the focus group, you are consenting to the data being used for this purpose.

Project team:

Alice Mūrage (alice_murage@sfu.ca), SFU— Research Lead
 Grace Kwan (researchfellow@vafcs.org), VAFCS— Research Fellow
 Dr. Julia Smith (jhs6@sfu.ca), SFU— Academic Advisor

CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Your participation in this focus group is wholly voluntary. You may choose to answer or not answer any of the questions posed during the discussion. You may end your participation at any time. To facilitate analysis, we would like your consent to sound record the focus group. The recording will be fully and confidentially transcribed by a professional transcribing company that has signed a confidentiality agreement. If you do not wish to be sound recorded, you cannot participate in the focus group, but we can schedule a one-to-one interview where we only take written notes – please let us know if you would prefer this option. The transcripts of focus groups will be stored in a secure, password protected digital location, coded to ensure confidentiality, and be accessible only by the project team.

To produce research outputs, we would like your consent to potentially use your responses in the writing of a project report, scholarly outputs and other outputs, such as presentations. The citation of any quote will be done anonymously. We will not include your name or any identifying information in any output.

Where your permission is granted to quote your responses in outputs, for each quote used, any risks/benefits to you or others will be carefully considered before deciding whether or how to use the quote. The research team has substantial experience of conducting this kind of study, including discussing subjects of cultural and personal sensitivity, and dealing with ethical and data protection issues. The project will regard all data as restricted data and thus not subject to distribution to the public given participant confidentiality. We will maintain confidentiality in outputs and will not share your personal information with anyone outside the research team. Any data you provide may be transmitted and stored in countries outside of Canada, as well as in Canada, because of platforms we use in this research such as Zoom, SurveyMonkey, and One Drive. It is important to remember that privacy laws vary in different countries and may not be the same as in Canada. We encourage participants not to discuss the content of the focus group to people outside of the group; however, we can't control what participants do with the information discussed.

What participants will do

As a participant, you are being contacted by a member of the research team by email or telephone and requested to voluntarily take part in a focus group. Information about the project will be provided beforehand along with this consent form. The focus group will be conducted virtually and will last approximately 60 to 75 minutes. You will be asked questions about your knowledge and experience as a social services worker supporting survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Right before we start the focus group, you will be requested to voluntarily complete a short 2 to 5-minute questionnaire collecting demographic information. This information will give context to the research and data analysis. Specific information about your employment will not be asked.

Location and method of data collection

All focus groups will be conducted by research team members who are located at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Center Society in Vancouver,

BC and. Focus groups will be conducted either in-person at a central location or on Zoom's secure online system. Demographic data will be collected online through SFU-licensed Survey Monkey.

Security of the Raw Data

Where permission is granted, focus groups will be sound recorded using a digital recorder. Files will be electronically transferred to a secure password-protected OneDrive. The sound files will be transcribed by a professional transcribing company that has signed a confidentiality agreement. Sound recordings will be deleted following transcription and verification of transcripts by the research team. Cleaned transcripts (where all identifying information has been removed) will be saved as Word files in OneDrive to facilitate data sharing and analysis across the project team. Information shared will be anonymized and copied into an electronic database saved in OneDrive for analysis.

The demographic questionnaires will be disseminated through the SFU-licensed Survey Monkey hosted in Canada will be used. However, the parent company is owned and operated in the U.S.A. and may be subject to the U.S. laws. This questionnaire is confidential. Once received, your identifying information (initials) will be replaced with a code, the key to which will only be available to the lead researcher. Complete anonymized questionnaires will be stored in a secure password protected OneDrive only accessible to the project team. As required by the project funder, the data from this project will be retained for six years after the project ends.

Potential risks and benefits to participants

We recognize that discussion about workplace and systemic challenges, including impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, may present emotional risks to participants. If you feel uncomfortable with a question or experience fatigue or stress, you will be welcome to take a short break or end your participation. All participants will be provided with information on where they can access professional and personal support. If you feel that there are any other relevant risks from your participation, additional attention will be given to the need for security and confidentiality in data collection and analysis (described above).

There will be no direct benefits to participants as individuals. However, your participation will contribute to greater understanding of the experiences of social services workers supporting survivors of GBV and inform workplace and policy changes.

Participation supports

All participants will receive a \$50 honorarium via Interac e-Transfer. Those who will need to make childcare arrangements to participate will receive an additional \$30.

For in-person participants: You will additionally receive a transportation compensation of \$20 and light refreshments right before the focus group discussions.

Translation, interpretation, and sign language (ASL) support will be made available if needed. For logistical reasons, a one-to-one interview might be arranged in case only one person in a focus group speaks a different language. Please let us know ahead of time about any support you might need.

Withdrawal from the study

You may withdraw from participation in this study at any time before November 2024 by contacting me at alice_murage@sfu.ca. Due to the nature of discussions, where contributions are made from several participants without necessarily including names of contributors, removing your specific contributions within the focus group might be a challenge. However, following a request to withdraw from the study we will delete all information pertaining to your participation to the best of our ability. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you.

Follow up

If you have any further questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at alice_murage@sfu.ca or Dr. Julia Smith at jhs6@sfu.ca.

Consent

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you can withdraw from the study until November 2024 without giving a reason and without any effect on you.

At the beginning of the focus group, you will be asked if you have read this document, and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions before you consent to participating. You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study.

For in-person participants: The facilitator will share a consent form which you will be required to sign if you agree to participate in the study.

- Your name (or initials) and signature on the consent form will indicate that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your records, and that you consent to participate in this study.

For virtual participants: The facilitator will ask for you to consent using a private chat message asking, 'Do you consent to participate in this study?'

- Your written agreement (writing 'yes' in the chat box) indicates that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your own records.
- Your written agreement indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Results

The results of this research and updates on the project will be made available on the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Center Society website- <https://vafcs.org/vavpp-research-project>

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact please contact the Director, SFU Office of Research Ethics, at kristie_westerlaken@sfu.ca or 778-782-6593.

Counselling resources

If you would like to speak to a counsellor or therapist about stressors you might be experiencing or to seek wellness support, please reach out to any counselling avenue available through your work, or use the following recommended resources:

- VAFCS in-house counsellor (no charge)
- [KUU-US Crisis Line Society](#) (no charge)
- [Wellness Together Canada](#) (no charge)
- [MOSAIC counselling services](#) (no charge)
- [Healing in Color BIPOC therapists' directory](#)